Director. Producer. Co-Writer. Casting Director. Actor. For Corey Lipkins, Jr., a student at The Ohio State University, those responsibilities all came during one play: “From the Depths of Hell,” a production based on the life of Lakeisha Davis, who lives in Corey’s home town of Canton, Ohio.

Corey, now a sophomore majoring in Theatre with a minor in Media Production and Analysis, started dreaming of working in the theatre back in 5th grade. His school was putting on a talent show, and Corey wanted to participate, but he had a speech impediment that he thought would keep him from taking part. However, his teacher, Katharine Clay, told him that he could be on stage and that all he needed to do was his best. She gave him Tupac Shakur’s poem, “I Cry,” to recite. Corey practiced until each word was said as he wanted it to be said. During the talent show, as he read the poem aloud, Corey learned the power of words; as he heard the applause, he knew he had found where he belonged – on stage.

While at Lathrop Elementary School in Canton, Corey became a student in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s Young Scholars program, a comprehensive pre-collegiate and collegiate program designed to enhance the academic, personal, and career development of its first-generation college students. During elementary and high school, Corey continued his love of writing and acting, and when he was named Novice Director of his high school’s speech and debate team, he also took an interest in directing. With all of this experience – at the age of eighteen and only a freshman at Ohio State – Corey was approached by Lakeisha Davis, who had given birth to three children whose father mentally and physically abused her. Lakeisha had created a rough draft of a play about her life, and Corey was able to expand that story and bring the characters within to life.

At first, Corey was only going to act in the “From the Depths of Hell,” but he soon took on the role of director and producer, working with a cast of 15 actors in a musical that includes praise dancing, drama, and singing. With the help of an Undergraduate Research Grant from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Corey was able to obtain the Martin Center in Canton as the venue, advertise the play, and secure Ohio-native R&B singer Shirley Murdock, who gave a mini-concert after the performance. Her son also attends Ohio State, and Corey hopes that his production company, CL Jr Productions, can show the play in Columbus as well.
Corey said of his experience producing “From the Depths of Hell,” “When I was born over 19 years ago, I was a dreamer. Today, I am still a dreamer. Thank you, ODI, for pushing me closer to my dreams.” He hopes that anyone seeing the play will walk away with a new faith and a new peace, knowing that someone else has gone through something terrible and rose above. For Corey, theatre should not only entertain, it should inspire.

Whatever Corey does in the future, it will be both entertaining and inspiring. We wish him all the best.