Denise Saunders Thompson has extensive experience in non-profit and for-profit, established or start-up organizations. She has advised organizations on administrative, programmatic and fundraising issues including strategic plans, policy and procedures, communications programs, budgeting and contracts. Denise was presented with the 2021 National Medal of Arts by President Biden during an East Room ceremony at the White House. She received the award on behalf of The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD).

In August of 2021, Denise returned to Howard University's Chadwick A. Boseman College of Fine Arts where she served as the Assistant Dean for Administration and in June 2026 was appointed the Assistant Dean of Events and Events. In addition, she served as the President and Chief Executive Officer (2010-2023) for The International Association of Blacks in Dance, a non-profit service organization, and D.d.Saunders & Associates, Inc., a comprehensive fine arts advisory firm offering artist management/ representation, arts producing, consulting, and production services. From 2015-2018, she held the position of Professorial Lecturer at American University in the Graduate Arts Management Degree Program, and in April 2015, Denise completed 17 years of service at Howard University in the capacities of Professor, Theatre Manager/ Producing Artistic Director for the Department of Theatre Arts and Manager of Cramton Auditorium.

In June 2022, Saunders Thompson co-curated **Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH)**, co-founded 53 years ago by visionary Artistic Director Arthur Mitchell, and Karel Shook, and two companies, **Ballethnic Dance Company** and **Collage Dance Collective**, founded by former DTH company members that carry his vision forward, for a week of performances at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts entitled "Reframing the Narrative." The three pillar companies performed together for the first time on the Opera House Stage to highlight the wide spectrum of their work and presence in ballet today and to celebrate what they have been doing for decades.

Denise is Co-Founder of PlayRight Performing Arts Center, Inc., a non-profit arts organization in Atlanta, Georgia, and former Business Manager for The Malone Group, Inc. a non-profit arts organization in Washington, D.C. that co-produced *Black Nativity* at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for six years. Denise currently serves on the Board of Trustees for Performing Arts Alliance, Friends of Theatre and Dance at Howard University, is a Member of Actors Equity Association (AEA) and Women of Color in the Arts (WOCA).

Freelancing in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and across the nation in production and arts management, Mrs. Thompson has held positions at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Debbie Allen Dance Academy, Alliance Theatre Company, National Black Arts Festival, 1996 Olympic Arts Festival, 1996 Olympics, Lincoln Theatre, Several Dancers Core, the Atlanta Dance Initiative, the Mark Taper Forum, the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, Harrah's Marina Hotel Casino as well as other numerous positions. In addition, she is a grant recipient of the Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African Art, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Montgomery Arts Council, the St. Paul Companies, and numerous others. She holds an M.F.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles in Arts Producing and Management, and a B.F.A. from Howard University in Theatre Arts Administration. Denise is the proud mother of Kellen, stepmom to Darrin, Jr., and happily married to Darrin, Sr.