Center Stage Announces 2015/16 Season, Two-Show Residency at Towson University

Calvert Street Building Renovations Move Final Two Productions of the Season to Towson University’s Center for the Arts

Baltimore—April 9, 2015. Center Stage announces its adventurous 2015-16 Season, which includes collaborations with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and a two-show temporary residency at Towson University.

As a major renovation and revitalization of Center Stage's historic Calvert Street home begins in January 2016, the final two plays of its 53rd Season will be hosted by Towson University.

The first three shows of the season will be produced at the Calvert Street theater, beginning with a world-premiere adaptation of Jane Austen’s mastery of manners, *Pride and Prejudice* from Sept. 11 to Oct. 11. Center Stage then will produce the enchanting family-friendly musical *The Secret Garden*, a co-production with Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park that will run in Baltimore from Oct. 30 to Nov. 29.

Just as football season gets into full swing, Center Stage will present the ripped-from-the-headlines *X's and O's (A Football Love Story)*, which explores our national love for the sport and the sometimes tragic results of that passion. Written by KJ Sanchez with Jenny Mercein, *X's and O's* was co-commissioned by Center Stage and Berkeley Rep, where it had its world premiere, and was developed in part through Center Stage's Play Lab program in 2013. Berkeley Rep's award-winning Artistic Director Tony Taccone, who commissioned and co-directed the world premieres of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, will direct Center Stage's production of *X's and O's*, which runs Nov. 13 to Dec. 20. Sanchez’s work was previously seen at Center Stage in the acclaimed *ReEntry*, which was produced as part of the theater’s 2010-11 Season.

Center Stage’s temporary residency at Towson University’s Center for the Arts will begin in 2016 with Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* performed by an all-female cast and running from Jan. 15 to Feb. 14. The final production of the season is *The Night Watcher*, an acclaimed one-woman show by actress Carlayne Woodard that explores a unique take on the idea of motherhood. *The Night Watcher* runs April 8 to May 8 to conclude the theater’s 2015-16 Season.

“I’m thrilled with our collaborations during this transformational season, especially with Towson University, with which we have had a profound, long-term relationship,” says Center Stage Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah. “Strengthening the community through partnerships is a hallmark of the Center Stage mission. We look forward to this adventure as we begin the next stage of the Center Stage journey.”

The shows hosted at Towson will be fully produced Center Stage productions, with a professional company and the same level of excellence. While in residence at Towson, Center Stage staff will participate in the university community as visiting artists in selected classes and offer Towson students exposure to the world of professional theater.

“Center Stage’s Calvert Street home is in great need of renovations to support the future of this institution,” Managing Director Stephen Richard says. “We have an ambitious plan for the building, the details of which we will share soon.”

Designed by Baltimore-based architects Cho Benn Holback (Baltimore School for the Arts, Everyman Theatre) and acclaimed London-based theater designers Charcoalblue (The Young Vic Theatre, The Shed at The National Theatre of Great Britain), the renovation and revitalization project will reimagine Center Stage for both audiences and artists, expanding artistic and production capabilities while providing new amenities that will improve and enrich the audience experience.

For more information, visit centerstage.org.
2015-16 Season Description

A World Premiere Production of Jane Austen’s

*Pride and Prejudice*
Adapted by Christopher Baker
Sep 11–Oct 11
At Center Stage’s Calvert Street Theater

Jane Austen’s mastery of manners and morals will be on full display in Center Stage’s new production of her beloved masterpiece, *Pride and Prejudice*. In the Bennet sisters’ 19th-century English world, marriage is the prize, but for second-eldest, Lizzy, companionship trumps blind courtship. Enter Mr. Darcy, and one of literature’s most iconic and tempestuous romances takes flight. Journey through a world quite unlike—and yet perhaps not so different from—our own, as Lizzy and Darcy learn that first impressions aren’t all they seem, and that second chances can lead to answers that have been there the entire time.

*The Secret Garden*
Book and Lyrics by Marsha Norman
Music by Lucy Simon
Based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett
Oct 30–Nov 29
At Center Stage’s Calvert Street Theater

Orphaned in a cholera epidemic, 10-year-old Mary Lennox travels from India to her new home in England where she is taken in by her distant and detached uncle, Archibald Craven, who is still grieving from the loss of his wife a decade earlier. Secrets of the past haunt the corners of the Craven manor, and soon Mary can only find refuge in a mysteriously locked garden that becomes her kingdom and her oasis. A lush, Tony-nominated musical based on the classic novel of the same name, *The Secret Garden* is an enchanting story about the pains and joys of growing up, and the beauty that often grows in the places we least expect.

*X’s and O’s (A Football Love Story)*
By KJ Sanchez with Jenny Mercein
Nov 13–Dec 20
At Center Stage’s Calvert Street Theater

Baltimore. Loves. Football. And as the season kicks into high gear, Center Stage brings you a hard-hitting, ripped-from-the-headlines play about our love for the game. Based on interviews with players, their families, and their fans, *X’s and O’s* delves deep into the questions that are being asked around dinner tables across the country: what are the dangers of the game? Should our children play? How do we balance our love for the sport with its potential risks? Co-commissioned by Center Stage and Berkeley Repertory Theater, and developed in part through Center Stage’s Play Lab series, *X’s and O’s* is a celebration of football that fearlessly tackles the sometimes results of our passion for the sport.

*As You Like It*
By William Shakespeare
Jan 15–Feb 14
At Towson University’s Mainstage Theatre at the Center for the Arts

Shakespeare’s crowd-pleasing comedy takes Center Stage by way of a new production that turns the Elizabethan tradition of all-male casts on its head. Performed by an all-female company of actors, *As You Like It* tells the story of lovers Rosalind and Orlando who, when forced to flee into the Forest of Arden, become ensnared in a game of romance and mistaken
identity. Frenzied and beguiling, in As You Like It all the world’s a stage as understandings of love, gender roles, nature, and politics are up for grabs. Join us as we journey deep into the fertile Forest of Arden and explore this beloved comedy in a whole new light.

**The Night Watcher**  
By Charlayne Woodard  
Apr 8–May 8  
*At Towson University’s Mainstage Theatre at the Center for the Arts*

Societal and familial expectations are often defied when women—especially married women—choose to not have children. But for Tony-nominee and two-time Obie Award-winner Charlayne Woodard, preferring domestic freedom over procreation does not mean a childless life. *The Night Watcher* tells the story of a woman whose life as mentor, confidant, godmother, auntie, and friend to countless children has been enriched—and rocked—in ways both radical and subtle. Heart and humor abound in this luminous one-woman play *The Washington Post* hails as “funny, bruisingly poignant, artfully written, and quietly profound.”

Center Stage is supported by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC), an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. An agency of the Department of Business and Economic Development, the MSAC provides financial support and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, units of government, colleges, and universities for arts activities. Funding for the MSAC is also provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

**About Center Stage**  
Under the leadership of playwright, actor, and director Kwame Kwei-Armah OBE (Artistic Director) and national arts leader Stephen Richard (Managing Director), Center Stage is an artistically driven institution committed to engaging, entertaining, and enriching audiences through joyous and bold performances. Hailed by *The Wall Street Journal* as “a model of what regional theater can and should be,” Center Stage has, for more than 50 years, dedicated itself to exploring new works and bringing classics to life. This rich history is marked by critically acclaimed new works that have shaped the American theater—from the Tony Award-winning *The Triumph of Love* to world premieres such as *Miss Evers’ Boys* by David Feldshuh and *On the Verge* by Eric Overmyer. In 2013, Center Stage’s unprecedented presentation of the Tony Award-winning *Clybourne Park* in repertory with the world premiere of Kwei-Armah’s Beneatha’s Place sparked dialogue, drew international media attention, and became the subject of a nationally broadcast PBS documentary, “*A Raisin in the Sun Revisited: The Raisin Cycle* at Center Stage.” With its signature focus on civic and community engagement, Center Stage enters its 53rd season with a commitment to exploring how art and entertainment communicate in the 21st Century and to igniting conversation in Baltimore and beyond.