

CENTERSTAGE

SMARTBOLDALIVE

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UK AWARD-WINNER *ELMINA'S KITCHEN* RECEIVES AMERICAN PREMIERE AT CENTERSTAGE; TONY NOMINEE McCLINTON DIRECTS

BALTIMORE—CENTERSTAGE continues its 42nd Season with the American premiere of an explosive urban drama by Kwame Kwei-Armah, *Elmina's Kitchen*. Brought to the stage by CENTERSTAGE Associate Artist and Tony nominee Marion McClinton, previews begin December 31st in The Pearlstone Theater; *Opening Night* is January 5th, and performances run through January 30th.

THE PLAY

Things are rough in Hackney's "Murder Mile," and it's all single-dad Deli can do to keep his take-out joint in business. Now his only son wants to start running with the most flash of the local toughs, his estranged father has reappeared, and it looks like he's got woman trouble. Shot through with sensual West Indian rhythms and cleaved with the explosive danger of urban backstreets, this award-winning new play from London's Royal National Theatre pictures inner-city plight in bitterly funny and tragically human terms, examining what we inherit and what we pass on.

Elmina's Kitchen was commissioned by London's esteemed National Theatre in 2001, and received its world premiere there in April 2003. An immediate sensation with both audiences and critics, the play netted author Kwame Kwei-Armah the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright and ran for over three months. The production will tour the UK in February 2005 with Kwei-Armah in the cast.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Kwame Kwei-Armah is the author of six plays, including a '60s style musical, *Blues Brother, Soul Sister, Big Nose*, an adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* set during the '50s French colonial period; and *Bitter Herb*, which earned him the Peggy Ramsay Award (named for the prolific English literary agent). His latest, *Fix Up*—set in a political Black bookstore in the Tottenham area of Northeast London and the second of his trilogy of plays set in Black British institutions—is another National Theatre commission and will premiere there this month.

Prior to the acclaimed premiere of *Elmina's Kitchen* last year, Kwei-Armah was best known in the UK as an actor. He recently left the popular BBC medical drama *Casualty* after five seasons as dedicated paramedic Finlay Newton. He also gained much publicity with his participation in a Comic Relief celebrity version of the reality television hit, *Fame Academy*. Though he placed third in the charity competition, the appearance resulted in a recording contract and the release of his first CD in November 2003.

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THE CAST

Thomas Jefferson Byrd* (*Digger*) makes his CENTERSTAGE debut. He appeared on Broadway as Toledo in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, receiving a Tony nomination for Featured Actor in a Play. His regional credits include *Home*, *Two Trains Running*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at Alliance Theatre Company; *Flyin' West*, *Hamlet*, and *Miss Evers' Boys* at Indiana Repertory Theatre; and *Spunk* at San Diego Repertory Theatre. His film roles include *Bamboozled*, *Get on the Bus*, and *He Got Game*, all directed by Spike Lee; *Set It Off*; and *MacArthur Park*, which earned him a Best Lead Actor nomination at the Sundance Film Festival. His television featured roles include *Living Single*, *Mama Flora's Family*, *Passing Glory*, and *Boycott*. Mr. Byrd received his MFA in Dance from California Institute of the Arts.

Yvette Ganier* (*Anastasia*) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where she appeared in the *Vivat!* reading of *Drowning Crow* and the *First Look* workshop of *Intimate Apparel*. She appeared on Broadway in *King Hedley II*. Her New York credits include her Obie-winning performance in *Breathe, Boom, Jitney, Hoopz*; and *The Quadron Ball*. Her regional credits include the world premiere of *Gem of the Ocean* at Goodman Theatre, *Two Trains Running* at Cleveland Playhouse, and *Jitney* at Pittsburgh Public Theater and Seattle Repertory Theatre. Ms. Ganier's film and television credits include *Fight Knights*, *Driving Fish*, *The Message*, *Queens Supreme*, *Third Watch*, *All My Children*, and *Luther's Choice*.

Leroy McClain* (*Ashley*) makes his CENTERSTAGE debut. His regional credits include *Richard II* at Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey and *The Taming of the Shrew* at Yale Repertory Theatre. Mr. McClain received his MFA from Yale School of Drama.

Curtis McClarin* (*Deli*) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where he appeared in *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Day of Absence*. He appeared on Broadway in *Drowning Crow* and *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*. His Off Broadway credits include *The Exonerated*, *Tartuffe*, and *East Texas Hot Links*. His regional credits include *Jitney* at Crossroads Theatre, *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* and *The Day the Bronx Died* at Long Wharf Theatre, and *Bailey's Café* at Hartford Stage Company. His television credits include *Soul Food*, *Civil Sex/The Bayard Rustin Project*, *Deadline*, *Law & Order*, *Oz*, *New York Undercover*, *NYPD Blue*, and the HBO Movie *Path to War*. Mr. McClarin's film credits include *Ripe*, *Fresh*, and *Letters from a Wayward Son*.

Ernest Perry, Jr.* (*Baygee*) makes his CENTERSTAGE debut. He appeared on Broadway in *Death and the King's Horseman*. His regional credits include *Oo-Bla-Dee* at LaJolla Playhouse; *Heartbreak House*, *Galileo*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Drowning Crow*, and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at Goodman Theatre; *Five Rooms of Furniture* at Organic Theater Company; *Will the Circle be Unbroken* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company; *Mary Stuart* at Court Theatre; and *King Hedley II* at Alliance Theatre Company. Mr. Perry's film and television credits include *Love Liza*, *Liar Liar*, *A Rage in Harlem*, *Cold Justice*, *The Color of Money*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *ER*.

Sullivan Walker* (*Clifton*) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where he appeared in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. He appeared on Broadway in *Two Trains Running*. He appeared Off Broadway in *The Odyssey* and *Rum an Coca Cola*. His regional credits include "*Master Harold*"...*and the Boys*, *Two Can Play*, *Alterations*, and *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Mr. Walker's film and television credits include *On the Edge of Innocence*, *Lush Life*, *Earth 2*, *The Firm*, *Where I Live*, *Misplaced*, *Runaway*, *Crocodile Dundee*, *Law & Order: SVU*, and a recurring role on *The Cosby Show*.

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THE ARTISTIC TEAM

Marion McClinton (**Director**) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where he has directed *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Les Blancs*, *Jitney*, *Seven Guitars*, *Two Trains Running*, *Splash Hatch on the E Going Down*, *Day of Absence*, *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, *Police Boys* (also author), and readings of *Drowning Crow* for *Vivat!* and *Intimate Apparel* for *First Look*. He recently directed the world premiere of August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* at Goodman Theatre and Mark Taper Forum. His Broadway productions include *Drowning Crow*, the revival of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and *King Hedley II* (Tony nomination). His Off Broadway credits include *Jitney* (Obie and Lortel Awards; also Royal National Theatre, London: Olivier Award, Best Play), *Roar, Talk*, and *Breath, Boom*. In addition to *Police Boys*, his plays include *Walkers*, *Stones and Bones*, and *Who Causes the Darkness?* Mr. McClinton is an Associate Artist at CENTERSTAGE as well as at Mark Taper Forum, Playwrights Horizons, and Pillsbury House Theatre, and is an alumnus of New Dramatists.

Neil Patel (**Scenic Designer**) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where he designed scenery for *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *The Hostage*, *As You Like It*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *Seven Guitars*, *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, and *Two Trains Running*. His Broadway credits include *Sideman* (also London). He has also designed extensively for many of the country's top regional theaters, and his work has been recognized with numerous awards.

David Burdick (**Costume Designer**), CENTERSTAGE's resident costumer, has designed costumes for *Picnic, a.m. Sunday*, *The Rainmaker*, *Bliethe Spirit*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Short Plays by Thornton Wilder*, *The Hostage*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Travels With My Aunt*, *Les Blancs*, *Hannah Senesh* for *The Feminine Singular: Women Speak Solo*, and *Private Lives*.

Michelle Habeck (**Lighting Designer**) makes her CENTERSTAGE debut. On Broadway, she was Associate Lighting Designer for *The Boy from Oz* and Assistant Lighting Designer for *Movin' Out*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *The Green Bird*. Her regional credits include productions at Alliance Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and Lookingglass Theatre Company.

Shane Rettig (**Sound Designer**) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where he designed sound for *a.m. Sunday*. His New York credits include *Venus* at The Public Theater, *Boy Meets Girl* at Playwrights Horizons, and *Be Aggressive* at Soho Repertory Theatre.

David Leong (**Fight Coordinator**) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where his consulting credits include *Jitney* and *Les Blancs* among others. His Broadway credits include *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *King Hedley II*, *The Rainmaker*, *Company*, *Picnic*, *Carousel*, *Hamlet*, and *The Homecoming*. His film credits include *Titus Andronicus* and *Alien Resurrection*.

Gillian Lane-Plescia (**Dialect Coach**) returns to CENTERSTAGE, where her consulting credits include *Sweeney Todd*, *Mary Stuart*, and *Peter Pan* among numerous others.

Judy Dennis (**Casting Director**), a CENTERSTAGE Associate Artist and director of last season's *First Look* workshop of *Crippled Sisters*, continues as Casting Director.

Debra Acquavella* (**Stage Manager**) has stage managed *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Picnic*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *a.m. Sunday* for CENTERSTAGE.

* Member of Actors' Equity Association

Ticket prices for *Elmina's Kitchen* range from \$10 to \$60, and are available at the CENTERSTAGE Box Office, by phone at 410.332.0033, or online at www.centerstage.org.

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By Kwame Kwei-Armah
Directed by Marion McClinton
The Pearlstone Theater
December 31, 2004–January 30, 2005

An American Premiere

This production supported in part by an award from the
National Endowment for the Arts.

THE CAST

Digger _____ Thomas Jefferson Byrd
Anastasia _____ Yvette Ganier
Ashley _____ Leroy McClain
Deli _____ Curtis McClarin
Baygee _____ Ernest Perry, Jr.
Clifton _____ Sullivan Walker

THE ARTISTIC TEAM

Director _____ Marion McClinton
Associate Director _____ Ron O.J. Parson
Scenic Designer _____ Neil Patel
Costume Designer _____ David Burdick
Lighting Designer _____ Michelle Habeck
Sound Designer _____ Shane Rettig
Dialect Consultant _____ Gillian Lane-Plescia
Fight Coordinator _____ David Leong
Production Dramaturgs _____ Madeleine Oldham, Dylan Southard, Gavin Witt
Casting Director _____ Judy Dennis
Stage Manager _____ Debra Acquavella
Assistant Lighting Designer _____ Jason Arnold
Assistant Stage Manager _____ Mike Schleifer

FOR COMPLETE COMPANY BIOS AND MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT THE ONLINE MEDIA CENTER AT MEDIA.CENTERSTAGE.ORG.

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Schedule & Ticket Information

ELMINA'S KITCHEN

By Kwame Kwei-Armah
Directed by Marion McClinton

Shot through with lilting West Indian rhythms and cleaved with the explosive danger of urban backstreets, this award-winning new play from the UK delves into the lives of a tight band of survivors wrestling with the realities of inner-city life, examining what we inherit and what we pass on.

Where

The Pearlstone Theater at CENTERSTAGE

Dates

December 31, 2004–January 30, 2005

Performance Times

Tuesday through Saturday: 8 pm
Sunday: 7:30 pm
Saturday & Sunday Matinee: 2 pm
Wednesday Matinee: January 12th, 1 pm

Tickets

\$10—\$60

Student and Senior Discount Tickets

Half-price on the day of show

Box Office

Call 410.332.0033 for tickets and information. Tickets are also available online at www.centerstage.org.
TTY 410.332.4240

Group Tickets

Special discounts are available for groups of 15+ by contacting Group Sales at 410.986.4012, or by e-mail to groups@centerstage.org.

Information

E-mail to info@centerstage.org or visit our website at www.centerstage.org.

Performance Extras

AfterThoughts

Join CENTERSTAGE's Dramaturgy staff for a deeper look into the production at these post-show discussions.

Thursday, January 20th, 8 pm

Sunday, January 23rd, 2 pm

Thursday, January 27th, 7 pm

Child's Play

On-site theater-related "play care" for children aged four to ten during select Saturday matinees. \$12 per child; pre-registration is required.

Saturday, January 22nd, 2 pm

Saturday, January 29th, 2 pm

Food for Thought

Join Resident Dramaturg Gavin Witt for an informal chat about the themes and social context of *Elmina's Kitchen* at Dark Sky Café/Clayton Fine Books at 317 North Charles Street.

Wednesday, December 15th, 12:30 pm

LiVE! @ CENTERSTAGE

Keep it LiVE! after your 9–5. *The Sun's* LiVE! section sponsors a pre-show cocktail hour for young professionals (35 and under). \$5 cover; free for **LiVE! @ CENTERSTAGE** subscribers. *AfterThoughts* discussion follows the performance.

Thursday, January 20th; reception starts at 6:30 pm

Meet the Actors

Want the cast's view of life at CENTERSTAGE? Actors field audience questions after the show.

Friday, January 7th, 8 pm

Night Out

Baltimore OutLoud and Viccino Bistro sponsor a pre-show cocktail hour for theater-loving members of Baltimore's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities. \$5 cover; free for subscribers.

Tuesday, January 4th; reception starts at 6:30 pm

Twilight Thursday

There's no need to make a late night of a night at the theater with this performance that begins one hour earlier than most evening shows. *AfterThoughts* discussion follows the performance.

Thursday, January 27th, 7 pm

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Accessibility Options

CENTERSTAGE believes that the arts should be accessible to everyone. In an effort to open our doors and our art to everyone in the community, we offer several programs for patrons with disabilities.

Wheelchair Access

CENTERSTAGE is ADA compliant, with a gently sloping entry ramp, and a wheelchair-accessible box office window and bathrooms.

Assisted Listening System

An infrared listening system is available at all performances for patrons with hearing impairments. Wireless headsets are available free of charge at the Intermission Express counter.

Sign Interpretation

A Sign Master works with the artistic staff and interpreters to provide a cohesive American Sign Language interpretation, incorporating the style and artistic characteristics of the performance. Please request sign interpretation when purchasing your tickets or subscription.

Friday, January 28th, 8 pm

Production Programs & Brochures

Large print and abridged Braille production programs are available to patrons who are blind or have low-vision. Large print season brochures are also available upon request at the gift shop.

Audio Description

Volunteer audio describers provide a live description of the unspoken action on stage, which is transmitted to a small, hand-size receiver. Please request audio description when purchasing your tickets or subscription for one of these scheduled performances.

Saturday, January 8th, 2 pm

Friday, January 21st, 8 pm

Sunday, January 23rd, 2 pm & 7:30 pm

Upcoming Events

Community Forum: Breaking the Cycle

CENTERSTAGE and *Urbanite* are teaming up for Breaking the Cycle—a forum and open house on families, fatherhood, and forgiveness in the inner city—on Saturday, January 15, from 2–5 pm in The Pearlstone Theater.

Held in conjunction with our American premiere of *Elmina's Kitchen*, this unique day of community programming will feature speeches by playwright Kwame Kwei-Armah and noted LA-based activist and peace negotiator Aqeela Sherrills; a conversation on the issues of peace, justice, family, civic responsibility, and forgiveness with Sherrills and Kwei-Armah; Q&A sessions with the audience; and performances by spoken word artists, poets, rappers, and performance artists inspired and informed by the topics of the day as well as *Elmina's Kitchen*. Community organizations will have representatives on hand with information on how members of the greater Baltimore community can get involved and help “break the cycle.”

Admission is free, but reservations are required. Call the CENTERSTAGE Box Office at 410.332.0033 for more information or to reserve tickets.

Student Press Night

Join CENTERSTAGE's Public Relations Department for a **Press Night** designed especially for high school and college students. This one-of-a-kind opportunity is open to students by invitation only.

Elmina's Kitchen Student Press Night is Thursday, January 6th, 8 pm; check-in begins at 7:30 pm.

Contact Anne Ditmeyer in Public Relations at 410.986.4000, x4211, or e-mail aditmeye@centerstage.org for more information. Please note that instructors or advisors are not eligible for Student Press tickets.