

# CENTER STAGE PRESS

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## Center Stage to Receive \$50,000 Grant from National Endowment for the Arts

**Baltimore—December 14, 2016**—National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$30 million in grants as part of the NEA's first major funding announcement for fiscal year 2017. Included in this announcement is an Art Works grant of \$50,000 to Center Stage for the world premiere of *Jazz*, a new play written by Nambi E. Kelley, based on the novel by Toni Morrison. The Art Works category focuses on the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts and the strengthening of communities through the arts.

"The arts are for all of us, and by supporting organizations such as Center Stage, the National Endowment for the Arts is providing more opportunities for the public to engage with the arts," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Whether in a theater, a town square, a museum or a hospital, the arts are everywhere and make our lives richer."

"We're thrilled that the NEA has chosen to support our world premiere production of *Jazz*, which will not be a typical 'page-to-stage' literary adaptation, but rather an experimental artistic endeavor, combining the elements of literature, poetry, storytelling and theater with music, movement and spoken word," said Center Stage Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah, who will direct the play. "This adaptation and this production are about more than just staging a landmark work of literary genius; they offer a way to use the metaphorical megaphone of our stage, the local and national resonance this project can claim, allowing broad access to a story as powerful, as timely, and as necessary in its message as the day it was written."

Center Stage, which has a strong history of supporting writers through every stage of play development, commissioned playwright Nambi E. Kelley to write *Jazz*, a world premiere play based on the novel by Toni Morrison. The production will run from May 19 to June 25. Morrison's exhilarating novel explores complex familial relationships while evoking rhythmic nuances of life during the Harlem Renaissance. For more information about the production, visit [centerstage.org/ShowsandEvents/Jazz](http://centerstage.org/ShowsandEvents/Jazz).

For more information on projects included in the NEA grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](http://arts.gov/news).

### About Center Stage

Center Stage is a professional, nonprofit institution committed to entertaining, engaging and enriching audiences through bold, innovative and thought-provoking classical and contemporary theater.

Named the State Theater of Maryland in 1978, Center Stage has steadily grown as a leader in the national regional theater scene. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah OBE and Managing Director Michael Ross, Center Stage is committed to creating and presenting a diverse array of world premieres and exhilarating interpretations of established works.

Center Stage believes in access for all—creating a welcoming environment for everyone who enters its theater doors and, at the same time, striving to meet audiences where they are. In addition to our Mainstage, Off Center and Family Series productions in the historic Mount Vernon neighborhood, Center Stage ignites conversations among a global audience through our digital initiatives, which explore how technology and the arts intersect. The theater also nurtures the next generation of artists and theater-goers through the Young Playwrights Festival, Student Matinee Series and many other educational programs for students, families and professionals.



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