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Baltimore Center Stage Announces 58th Season

The 2020/21 Season includes Noah Diaz, Will Davis, Miranda Rose Hall, Taibi Magar, Thornton Wilder, Stevie Walker-Webb, Charlayne Woodard, Patricia McGregor, Suzanne Coley, Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi, and R. Eric Thomas

Baltimore, MD, June 24, 2020---- At a time of uncertainty with regards to the continuing effects of the global pandemic, as well as a much-needed reckoning of the ongoing racial injustice in our country, Baltimore Center Stage honors the collective need for progress, hope, and joy. This is not a time to return to the way the theater industry functioned before the pandemic, but rather to move forward and build new norms which make both enjoying theater as well as working in theater welcoming and accessible for *all* audiences and *all* artists. With that in mind, Baltimore Center Stage is proud to announce the theater's 58th Season, which will feature a four play Mainstage Series to reflect an abundance of care for our audiences and staff in the return to live performances, as well as a variety of programming, both virtual and in person, to provide as many access points as possible to Baltimore Center Stage.

"Throughout history, artists have made their home at the epicenter of change, shaping and reshaping our society by challenging norms, reflecting on the best and worst of humanity, and daring to imagine our future," said **Artistic Director Stephanie Ybarra**. "I'm confident that through our 20/21 artistic programming and organizational practices, Baltimore Center Stage will serve that legacy well. It is a gift to navigate the next twelve months with the BCS staff, board, and audiences alongside our 20/21 artists."

Curated with Baltimore audiences in mind, the four productions of the Mainstage Series feature deeply personal stories, designed to entertain and inspire the collective imagination. The Mainstage Series includes three world premieres, beginning with a Baltimore Center Stage commission, ***The Swindlers: A True-ish Tall Tale***, written by and featuring **Noah Diaz** (*Richard & Jane & Dick & Sally*), directed by **Will Davis**; an interactive new work, ***A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction***, by Baltimore-

born playwright **Miranda Rose Hall**, directed by **Taibi Magar**; a Baltimore-inspired ***Our Town***, by **Thornton Wilder**, directed by **Stevie Walker-Webb**; and ***The Garden***, written by and starring Broadway and TV Star **Charlayne Woodard** (*Pose*) and directed by **Patricia McGregor**. The Mainstage Series begins in January in a reconfigured Head Theater, reimagined to support both social distancing guidelines and a singular artistic experience.

Baltimore Center Stage is revitalizing its **commissioning program** with an investment in local artists and a commitment to intentional, individualized processes. Throughout the 20/21 season, BCS will develop two new works centering the city of Baltimore with **Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi** and **R. Eric Thomas**. Baltimore Center Stage has also commissioned local visual artist **Suzanne Coley** to create original pieces of artwork for the Mainstage Series.

The 20/21 Season also includes the **launch of a new Bridge Series** that will explore the interconnectedness of classic and contemporary theater through virtual readings and conversations between artists and scholars; a **revitalization of Baltimore Center Stage's commissioning program** with a focus on artists with Baltimore roots; and a **variety of civic programming** for people to engage with beyond the productions on stage. Finally, Baltimore Center Stage will continue to deliver **learning programs for students of all ages**, including the continuation of its virtual student matinees and the celebrated Young Playwrights Festival.

Key to the 2020/21 season is Baltimore Center Stage's commitment to continue along the path of keeping antiracism and anti-oppression at the center of both artistic practice and operational policies. In the coming weeks, Baltimore Center Stage will publicly announce updates on previously made commitments regarding anti-Blackness in the community, as well as adjustments in artistic processes to create more humane and equitable working conditions.

"The compounding effects of a global pandemic and ongoing racial injustice have forced a long-overdue reckoning, inspiring a renewed commitment to what we say we value," said **Artistic Director Stephanie Ybarra**. "And, in order to move toward our highest ideals, come what may, we can never go back."

MAINSTAGE SERIES

The Swindlers: A True-ish Tall Tale

By Noah Diaz

Directed by Will Davis

Commissioned by Baltimore Center Stage

Jan 28-Feb 28, 2021

The author of last season's critically acclaimed *Richard & Jane & Dick & Sally* is back with a Baltimore Center Stage original. Marie is plagued by the winter blues. Her boyfriend's a dud, her bank statements are piling up, and her house suddenly foreclosed. Oh, and the FBI is looking for her father, a notorious con man on the run for swindling families and businesses out of their money. When Marie discovers that her house is foreclosed because of him, she tracks him down and blackmails him into a cross-country road trip to return the stolen funds before the foreclosure is finalized. Loosely inspired by the real-life exploits of the playwright's grandfather, this raucous new road-trip comedy explores redemption, reconciliation, and the unspoken rewards of surviving time with family.

A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction

By Miranda Rose Hall

Directed by Taibi Magar

Mar 25-Apr 25, 2021

Baltimore's own Miranda Rose Hall returns to BCS with this darkly comic world premiere play. The Zero Omissions Theater Company desperately wants the audiences of their climate change play to WAKE UP! But when things don't go as planned, it's up to their stage manager/light board operator/dramaturg Naomi to find a new way of telling their story. In this interactive, communal experience like no other, the play becomes an awakening about how to be human in an era of man-made extinction.

Our Town

By Thornton Wilder

Directed by Stevie Walker-Webb

Apr 29-May 23, 2021

Re-discover the Pulitzer Prize-winning classic play as you've never seen it before, drawing inspiration from our town, Baltimore. Directed by Obie Award winner Stevie Walker-Webb,

Our Town tells the story of a community: in their growing up and their marrying and their living and their dying. Widely regarded as the finest American play ever written, this Thornton Wilder masterpiece lifts up the beauty of ordinary human life and reminds us of how extraordinary each moment can be.

The Garden

By Charlayne Woodard
Directed by Patricia McGregor
A Co-Production with La Jolla Playhouse
May 27-June 20, 2021

Written by and starring the Tony Award® nominated artist Charlayne Woodard, this moving world premiere play explores the complex relationship between two “alpha” women: Claire Rose, an elderly Black woman and her middle-aged daughter, Cassandra. After not speaking to each other for the past three years, Cassandra shows up unexpectedly at her mother’s garden gate, attempting to reconcile old wounds. Both women give as good as they get, taking us on a rollercoaster ride unearthing conflicts and secrets of the past, and creating magic in the process.

About La Jolla Playhouse

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what’s new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 105 world premieres, commissioning 52 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – including the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

2020/2021 MAINSTAGE SERIES ARTISTS

About Noah Diaz

Noah Diaz is a playwright and screenwriter from the Iowa/Nebraska border. His plays have been developed with La Jolla Playhouse, Baltimore Center Stage, The Playwrights Realm, First Floor Theater, The Sol Project, Two River Theater, Howlround Latinx Theater

Commons, Seven Devils New Play Foundry, and WildWind Performance Lab. He is a recipient of the ASCAP Cole Porter Prize for Excellence in Playwriting, a five-time recipient of playwriting awards from the Kennedy Center, and is currently under commission from La Jolla Playhouse, Great Plains Theatre Conference, Manhattan Theatre Club/Sloan, Baltimore Center Stage, and Audible/Amazon Studios. MFA: Yale School of Drama.
www.noahdiaz.me

About Will Davis

Will Davis is a transgender director and choreographer focused on physically adventurous new work for the stage.

Off-Broadway credits include: *Road Show* (Encores! Off-Center); *India Pale Ale* (MTC); *Bobbie Clearly* (Roundabout Underground); *Charm* (MCC); *Men on Boats* (Clubbed Thumb and Playwrights Horizons—Lucille Lortel nomination); and *Duat* (Soho Rep). Regional credits include: *Spamtown, USA* (Children’s Theater Company); *Everybody* (Shakespeare Theater Company); *A Doll’s House, Part 2* (Long Wharf Theatre); *The Carpenter* (The Alley Theatre); *Colossal* (Olney Theatre Center and Mixed Blood Theater—Helen Hayes award for best direction); *Evita* (Olney Theatre Center—Helen Hayes award nomination); and multiple productions for ATC in Chicago where Davis also served as artistic director. He is an alum of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, the NYTW 2050 Directing Fellowship, the Brooklyn Art Exchange’s Artist in Residence program, and is currently a Princeton Arts Fellow.

About Miranda Rose Hall

Miranda Rose Hall is a playwright from Baltimore, MD. Her plays include *Plot Points in Our Sexual Development* (LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater, finalist for the 2019 Lambda Literary Award in Drama), *The Hour of Great Mercy* (Diversions Theater, 2019 San Diego Critics Circle Award for Outstanding New Play), and *The Kind Ones* (upcoming Magic Theatre). She is currently under commission from LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater, Yale Repertory Theater, Trinity Repertory Company, and Playwrights Horizons SoundStage. She has developed her work with New York Theater Workshop, Baltimore Center Stage, Woolly Mammoth, The Kennedy Center, Center Theater Group / We the Women, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, The Playwright’s Realm, National New Play Network, Orlando Shakespeare Theater, EnGarde Arts, Provincetown Theater, Two River Theater, Cygnet Theater, Single Carrot Theatre, and the Orchard Project. She is a founding member of LubDub Theatre, a New York-based physical theater company.

Miranda was the 2013-2014 Hot Desk Playwright in Residence at Baltimore Center Stage, where she helped launch the program Wright Right Now. She has taught at Georgetown University and Wesleyan University, and as a teaching artist with Baltimore Center Stage and Arena Stage. Miranda spent two years with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest,

serving marginalized populations in Anchorage, AK and Missoula, MT. She graduated with her BA from Georgetown University and her MFA from the Yale School of Drama.

About Taibi Magar

Taibi Magar is an Egyptian American, Obie-winning director based in New York, and a graduate of the Brown / Trinity MFA program. Her New York credits include *Help (The Shed) Is God Is* (Soho Rep), *Underground Railroad Game* (Ars Nova), *Master* (The Foundry) and *Blue Ridge, The Great Leap* (Atlantic Theatre Company). Regionally, Magar has directed for: A.R.T. (Boston), Seattle Rep, The Guthrie, Woolly Mammoth Theatre, Chautauqua Theatre, The Alley, TUTS Houston, Trinity Rep, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Playmakers Rep, and Shakespeare & Company. Additionally, *Underground Railroad Game* has been on an international tour for three years with stops at: Hamburg Festival, Edinburgh Fringe (Best in Fringe 2018), Soho Rep (London), Malthouse Theatre (Melbourne), Curious Theatre (Denver), Bard College, Williams College and University of Michigan.

Magar has also developed work with The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons and Theatre for a New Audience. She has received a Stephen Sondheim Fellowship, an Oregon Shakespeare Festival Fellowship, a Public Theater Shakespeare Fellowship, and the SDC Breakout Award 2019.

About Thornton Wilder

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) was a novelist and playwright whose works celebrate the connection between the commonplace and the cosmic dimensions of human experience. He is the only writer to win Pulitzer Prizes for both drama and fiction: for his novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, and two plays, *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. His other novels include *The Cabala*, *The Woman of Andros*, *Heaven's My Destination*, *The Ides of March*, *The Eighth Day* and *Theophilus North*. His other major dramas include *The Matchmaker* (adapted as the musical *Hello, Dolly!*) and *The Alcestiad*. *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden*, *Pullman Car Hiawatha* and *The Long Christmas Dinner* are among his well-known shorter plays. He enjoyed enormous success as a translator, adaptor, actor, librettist and lecturer/teacher and his screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* remains a classic psycho-thriller to this day. Wilder's many honors include the Gold Medal for Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. More information on Thornton Wilder and his family is available in Penelope Niven's definitive biography, *Thornton Wilder: A Life* (2013) as well as on the Wilder Family website, www.thorntonwilder.com

About Stevie Walker-Webb

Stevie Walker-Webb is an Obie award winning Director, Playwright, and Cultural Worker who believes in the transformational power of art. As a survivor of poverty and the

associative violence that comes with growing up Black and poor in America, he knows how liberating and necessary it is to create. He is a 2050 Fellow at New York Theatre Workshop and a recipient of the Princess Grace Award for Theatre. He's served as the Founding Artistic Director of the Jubilee Theatre and has created art and Theatre in Madagascar, South Africa, Mexico, and across America. He's worked as the Outreach Coordinator for Theatre of the Oppressed-NYC and holds an MFA from The New School, and a B.S. in Sociology from the University of North Texas. His work has been produced by: The Public Theater, American Civil Liberties Union, JAG Productions, Cherry Lane, Zara Aina, La Mama, The New Group, and Woolly Mammoth Theater Company. For more information about Stevie visit steviewalkerwebb.net.

About Charlayne Woodard

Charlayne Woodard is a playwright and actor. She has written and performed four acclaimed solo plays: *Pretty Fire* (LA Drama Critics and NAACP Awards - best play and best playwright); *Neat* (Irving and Blanche Laurie Theatre Vision Award & Outer Critics Circle Award nomination); *In Real Life* (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Award nominations, Audelco, Backstage West Garland and NAACP Awards); and *The Night Watcher* (LA Drama Critics Award). Her multi-character plays are *Flight* and *Phenom*. Her new play, *The Garden*, was commissioned by The LaJolla Playhouse. Ms. Woodard has also received commissions from Seattle Repertory Theatre and The Center Theater Group. Her plays are published by Dramatists Play Service. Recent acting credits include: *Daddy* by Jeremy O. Harris; *Hamlet (Gertrude)* dir. by Sam Gold; *The Substance of Fire* (2ST revival) by Jon Robin Bates; *The Witch of Edmonton* (Obie Award); *In The Blood* by Suzan-Lori Parks (Obie Award); *Fabulation*, by Lynn Nottage and, *Stunning* by David Adjmi. On Broadway, she was in the original company of *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Tony Award and Drama Desk award nominations). Regional credits include: *Taming of the Shrew* (Katherine) at Shakespeare Theatre Company and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The La Jolla Playhouse. Charlayne is a regular on the FX series *Pose* and reoccurs on both *Prodigal Son* and *Sneaky Pete*. For additional film and TV credits visit CharlayneWoodard.com.

Ms. Woodard trained at the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago, received an honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from DePaul University, and is a member of The Actor's Studio.

About Patricia McGregor

Patricia McGregor (she/her/hers). Born in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Patricia McGregor is a director and writer working in theater, film and music. McGregor has twice been profiled by *The New York Times* for her direction of world premieres. Productions include *Lights Out: Nat "King" Cole* (co-writer and director, Geffen Playhouse, People's Light); *Sisters In Law* (Wallis Annenberg) *What You Are*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure*

(The Old Globe); *Skeleton Crew* (Geffen Playhouse); *Good Grief* (Center Theater Group); *Hamlet* (The Public Theater); *The Parchman Hour* (The Guthrie Theater); *Ugly Lies the Bone* (Roundabout Theatre Company); *brownsville song...* (Lincoln Center); *Indomitable: James Brown* (The Apollo); *Holding It Down* (Metropolitan Museum); *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Spunk* (California Shakespeare Theater); *Adoration of the Old Woman* (INTAR); *Blood Dazzler* (Harlem Stage); *Four Electric Ghosts* (The Kitchen) and the world premiere of *Hurt Village* (Signature Theatre Company). She served as Associate Director of *Fela!* on Broadway. For many years she has directed The 24-Hour Plays on Broadway. She served as director for HBO emerging writer's showcase and tour consultant to Raphael Saadiq and J Cole. Her short film *Good Grief* will premiere this year. She co-founded Angela's Pulse with her sister, choreographer, and organizer Paloma McGregor, and sits on the advisory board of Adam Driver's Arts In the Armed Forces and the Parent Artist Advocacy League. McGregor attended the Yale School of Drama, where she was a Paul & Daisy Soros Fellow and Artistic Director of the Yale Cabaret.

2020/2021 BCS COMMISSIONED ARTISTS

About Suzanne Coley

Suzanne grew up in an artistic household in New York City. Following a career as a child abuse investigative officer, she returned to the art world with a firm belief in the power of art to document the forgotten, and to find humanity in the most cruel situations. Suzanne has a Master of Humanities degree with concentrations in philosophy and classical literature from the University of Colorado. While at university, she received the Kennedy Center ACTF meritorious award for her adaptation of the ancient Greek play *Lysistrata*.

She actively contributes to the intellectual and aesthetic exchanges between the arts and sciences. She has worked on a number of projects that have allowed this interaction, most notably the MIT Media Lab project involving computer science education for art-minded high school students. Her textile art books are in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institution (National Museum of African Art Library) and the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

About Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi

Dubbed the Ancient Jazz Priestess of Mother Africa, Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi is a Nigerian, Cuban, Indigenous, American Performance Artist, a Helen Hayes nominated actress, Author (*Yemaya's Daughters*, *Brew*, *Keeper*, *Incarnate*, *Wither*, *Bone*, *Solace*, *Hierodule*, *Baltimore: A Love Letter*, *Remains: A Gathering of Bones*, *The Blood of A Thousand Roots*, *For Black Trans Girls...*) Educator, Speech Writer, A Helen Hayes Nominated Playwright (*Klytmnestra: An Epic Slam Poem* (2020), *For Black Trans Girls...*,

Ghost/Writer), Advocate, Dramaturg, a Founding Member of Force Collision, a 2x Helen Hayes Award Nominated choreographer (2016, 2018) and co-editor of the Black Trans Prayer Book.

She is the founder of The Inanna D Initiatives, which curates, produces and cultivates events and initiatives designed to center and celebrate the work of TGNC Artist of Color. Considered one of the most prolific artists of our time, she is the first Trans woman of color to be nominated for a Helen Hayes Award (2016), and in DC to publish a work of Fiction (*Yemaya's Daughters* (2013)). She was also the first Twoc playwright to receive a DC mainstage world premiere of a play (*Klytmnestra: An Epic Slam Poem* at Theater Alliance in May 2019), which received four Helen Hayes Nominations in 2020 (Best Director, Best Lead Actress, Best New Play, Best Production.)

In 2015 she received an emerging Leader Award for her work with the D.C. Trans Community, is the GLBT History Project's 2018 receipt of the Mujeres en el Movimiento Arts Award and received Trans Latinx DMV's Community Artist Award. She has costarred as Patra and acted as a story consultant for the web series King Ester. Her radio play, *The Quest of The Reed Marsh Daughter*, can be heard on the Girl Tale's Podcast, and her play *The Diaz Family Talent Show* can be read on the Play at Home Website. She wrote episode 9 of the web series Homebound. She has two upcoming books, a novel *She of the Fallen Stars: A Space Opera* and a book of poetic reflections entitled *Infrastructure Of A Nation*.

About R. Eric Thomas

R. Eric Thomas, a national bestselling author and playwright, won the 2016 Barrymore Award for Best New Play and the 2018 Dramatist Guild Lanford Wilson Award and was a finalist for the 2017 Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award. He is the recipient of a 2017/2018 National New Play Network Commission and has also been commissioned or produced by Arden Theatre Company, Baltimore Center Stage, Theatre Exile, Simpatico Theatre, Azuka Theatre, Single Carrot Theatre, About Face Theatre, City Theatre Miami, Act II Playhouse and more. He is also the long-running host of The Moth in Philadelphia and D.C. and a Senior Staff Writer for Elle.com where he writes "Eric Reads the News," a daily current events and culture column with hundreds of thousands of monthly readers. His debut memoir-in-essays, *HERE FOR IT*, was published by Ballantine Books in February 2020 and *RECLAIMING HER TIME*, a biography of Rep. Maxine Waters co-authored with Helena Andrews-Dyer, will be published in fall 2020. Recent productions include *SAFE SPACE* (Single Carrot Theatre), *MRS HARRISON* (Azuka Theatre, Barrymore nomination - Best New Play), *MIRIAM1234* (City Theatre Miami) and *TIME IS ON OUR SIDE* (About Face Theatre & Simpatico Theatre). He is an alumnus of The Foundry, the Lambda Literary Fellowship, and the Ingram New Works Project at Nashville Repertory Theatre.

For other media related inquiries and interview requests please contact the Communications office. For general information, visit www.centerstage.org or call the box office at 410.332.0033.

About Baltimore Center Stage

Designated the State Theater of Maryland in 1978, Baltimore Center Stage provides the highest quality theater and programming for all members of our communities, including youth and families, under the leadership of Artistic Director Stephanie Ybarra and Executive Director Michael Ross. Baltimore Center Stage ignites conversations and imaginations by producing an eclectic season of professional productions across two mainstages and an intimate 99-seat theater, through engaging community programs, and with inspiring education programs. Everything we do at Center Stage is led by our core values—chief among them being Access For All. Our mission is heavily rooted in providing active and open accessibility for everyone, regardless of any and all barriers, to our Mainstage performances, education initiatives, and community programming.

