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**Baltimore Center Stage Announces 2017 Play Lab Off Center Fall
programming debut features local playwrights**

Baltimore—September 15, 2017. Baltimore Center Stage is pleased to announce the 2017/2018 debut of its Off Center programming with Play Lab on September 22-24, featuring *To the Flame* by Miranda Rose Hall and *Handle It* by Rachael Knoblauch.

Along with the previously announced productions of the 2017/18 Mainstage Season, Play Lab helps bring to life Center Stage's "Season of Community," where every program and production will explore the role of artists and institutions in building community. While the season's opening production, *The Christians*, explores the role of leadership—particularly leadership involving "conflicting truths"—in building community, Play Lab takes a more literal approach to community engagement, inviting hometown artists Hall and Knoblauch to partner with theatergoers to develop their works.

"For the first time in the history of Play Labs, this fall will bring a double bill of two plays and two playwrights to Center Stage's signature developmental workshop and reading series," said Gavin Witt, Associate Director and Director of Dramaturgy. "And to bust our dramaturgical buttons with pride, both writers are what you'd call homegrown talents. It's a pleasure to welcome these two dynamic young artists back into the building that they've made an artistic home—and to take the next step of this journey together."

Attending a Play Lab provides attendees with a “behind the scenes” look at a playwright’s creative process. Audiences will appreciate each play’s exploration of challenging themes and the post-show “Talk Back” offering the opportunity to discuss the subject matter and development process. Play Lab also provides additional access to the newly renovated Calvert Street building, as these events are hosted in the historic Jay Andrus Rehearsal Hall.

Play Lab will be held on Friday and Saturday, September 22 and 23 at 7 pm and Sunday, September 24 at 2 pm, with all seats available for \$10 (\$5 for Center Stage members). A free open rehearsal will be held Saturday, September 23 at 2:30 pm. Both one-act plays will be read at each event and Center Stage’s ever popular complimentary Toast Bar will be open preceding the readings.

Additional Off Center programming, performed in Center Stage’s intimate and innovative new Third Space, will include *White Rabbit Red Rabbit* by Nassim Soleimanpour from December 12–23, and a new adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* on March 22–25. *Twelfth Night* will also reach a variety of traditionally underserved audiences in and around Baltimore during a two-week run by Center Stage’s touring Mobile Unit. For more information, visit www.centerstage.org or call the box office at 410.332.0033.

Play Lab is made possible by The Nathan and Suzanne Cohen Foundation Fund for Commissioning and Developing New Plays. Off Center is supported in part by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC). To discover more about Maryland State Arts Council grants and how they impact Maryland’s arts sector, visit msac.org. Funding for the MSAC is also provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. Center Stage’s Season Sponsor is M&T Bank and the season is also made possible by The Shubert Foundation and the Baltimore County Commission on Arts and Sciences.

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About Baltimore Center Stage

Baltimore 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, Baltimore 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, Baltimore Center Stage is committed to creating and presenting a diverse array of world premieres and exhilarating interpretations of established works.

Baltimore 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 its Mainstage and Off Center productions in the historic Mount Vernon neighborhood, Baltimore Center Stage ignites conversations among a global audience through 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 educators.