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## **Baltimore Center Stage Announces Cast and Artistic Team for World Premiere of *SOUL The Stax Musical***

Baltimore---April 24, 2018. Baltimore Center Stage has announced the cast and artistic team for *SOUL The Stax Musical*, its final play of the 2017/18 season. This musical is inspired by the story of Stax Records and the rise of iconic artists such as Otis Redding, The Staple Singers, Isaac Hayes, Booker T. & The MG's, Rufus and Carla Thomas, David Porter, Wilson Pickett, Johnnie Taylor, and Eddie Floyd---who helped to create the very foundation of American Soul music. Through stories and song, *SOUL The Stax Musical* also celebrates how music played a role in bringing Americans together during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement, and continues to bring generations together, from those who remember the early days of R&B, to those who have discovered the phenomenal impact of Stax Records and its artists through recent interpretations of their legendary catalog of music.

The cast includes **Travante Baker\*** (Male Ensemble/Dance Captain), **Kyle Bary\*** (Al Jackson, Jr.), **Emmanuel Brown\*** (Male Ensemble), **Kevin Carolan\*** (Jerry Wexler), **Trevon Davis\*** (David Porter), **Ricky Fante\*** (Otis Redding), **Boise Holmes\*** (Isaac Hayes), **David LaMarr\*** (Booker T. Jones) **Robert Lenzi\*** (Jim Stewart), **Anastacia McCleskey\*** (Deanie Parker), **Mary Jo Mecca\*** (Estelle Axton), **Warner Miller\*** (Al Bell), **Chelsea Mitchell** (Dancer), **Wayne W. Pretlow\*** (Pops Staples), **Skye Scott\*** (Steve Cropper), **Allison Semmes\*** (Carla Thomas/Jean Knight), **Scott Stangland\*** (Donald "Duck" Dunn), **Jon Harrison Taylor\*** (Johnnie Taylor/Wilson Pickett), **Tasha Taylor\*** (Mavis Staples/Mable John), **Mari Andrea Travis** (Dancer) and **Harrison White\*** (Rufus Thomas).

The artistic team includes **Matthew Benjamin** (Playwright), **Kwame Kwei-Armah** (Director), **Chase Brock** (Choreographer), **Rahn Coleman** (Music Supervisor and Musical Director), **David Gallo** (Scenic & Co-Projection Designer), **Dede Ayite** (Costume Designer), **Mike Baldassari** (Lighting Designer), **Shane Rettig** and **Charles Coes** (Co-Sound Designers), **Alex Basco Koch** (Co-Projection Designer), **Daniel Bryant** (Assistant Director), **Alicia Lundgren** (Assistant Choreographer), **Danielle Teague-Daniels\*** (Stage Manager) and **Anthony O. Bullock\*** (Assistant Stage Manager). *SOUL The Stax Musical* is produced in association with Stuart Benjamin and Concord Music.

*\*member of Actors' Equity Association*



“Our playwright, Matthew Benjamin, was first drawn to soul music when he heard Otis Redding’s ‘Pain in My Heart.’ His passion has fueled this project from the start,” explained Director Kwame Kwei-Armah. “Everyone from artists to agents, from music executives to music directors has had to get in on it to make this project a possibility.”

*SOUL The Stax Musical* will also represent the culmination of the innovative, impactful tenure of Kwei-Armah, who served as Baltimore Center Stage’s artistic director for seven seasons. “With *SOUL The Stax Musical*, Kwame goes out with a high-energy bang, which mirrors the high-energy bang he thankfully brought to Center Stage and to Baltimore. We are thrilled to celebrate Kwame’s extraordinary artistry through this production,” said Michael Ross, Executive Director. Kwei-Armah has been named Artistic Director of the Young Vic in London, England.

Performances begin May 3, with previews through May 9. **Press Night is opening night, Thursday May 10.** For more information, visit [www.centerstage.org](http://www.centerstage.org) or call the box office at 410.332.0033.

*SOUL The Stax Musical* is supported in part by PNC Bank and Miles & Stockbridge. 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.

### **About Baltimore Center Stage**

Baltimore Center Stage is a theater committed to artistic excellence. We engage, enrich, and broaden the perspectives of diverse audiences through entertaining and thought-provoking work and educational programs. Named the State Theater of Maryland in 1978, Baltimore Center Stage has steadily grown as a leader in the national regional theater scene. Under Executive 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 doors and, at the same time, striving to meet audiences where they are. In addition to Mainstage and Third Space productions in the historic Mount Vernon neighborhood, Baltimore Center Stage ignites conversations across Baltimore and beyond through the Mobile Unit, which brings high-quality theater to economically, culturally and geographically diverse communities. The theater also nurtures the next generation of artists and theatergoers through the Young Playwrights Festival, Student Matinee Series, and many other educational programs for students, families, and educators.