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Congo Square announces 2007-08 Season

**Season expands to 4-plays,
including a world premiere by Javon Johnson,
the Midwest premiere of *Elmina's Kitchen*;
a comedy-drama about Howard University alumni;
and a World Premiere adaptation of *Black Nativity***

Chicago—Founding Artistic Director **Derrick Sanders** proudly announces the **2007-2008 Congo Square Theatre Company season**, including: the Midwest premiere of Kwame Kwei-Armah's *Elmina's Kitchen*; a World Premiere adaptation by **Brian Tucker** of *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes, to be performed at the Goodman Theatre; the Chicago Premiere of *The Talented Tenth* by Richard Wesley about alumni of Howard University, which is the alma mater of several Congo Square members; and the world premiere of *Sanctified* by founding ensemble member Javon Johnson.

Congo Square will be producing in its new home at the Green Street Theatre located at **The Chicago Center for the Performing Arts, 777 N. Green Street** (at Chicago Ave., just west of Halsted St.) *Black Nativity* will return to the Owen Stage at the **Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St.**

"The 2007-2008 season marks the first 4-play season in the company's history, which is sure to be a benchmark in the company's success, which is reaching an 8-year history," comments **Artistic Director Derrick Sanders**. "We continue the excitement of our 2006-07 season when we saw considerable artistic and managerial growth. We expanded our national reputation with several productions involving ensemble members produced throughout the country. This season, we remain dedicated to our mission and to our Chicago audiences and we look forward to performing in our new Chicago home at the CCPA."

THE 2006-2007 CONGO SQUARE THEATRE COMPANY SEASON INCLUDES:

**The Midwest Premiere of
Elmina's Kitchen
by Kwame Kwei-Armah
directed Derrick Sanders
featuring Ensemble Members Ron Conner, Anthony Irons, and Ann Joseph
September 13-October 14, 2007
Press Opening: September 15, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.**

This first major play by a young, British, black writer is a captivating and authentic contribution to World Theater as it examines the inheritance of British black youth of the 21st Century. *Elmina's Kitchen* is a fierce portrait of a difficult father-son relationship, struggling to stay within the law amidst a sea of thievery, protection rackets and violence on Hackney's Murder Mile. *Elmina's Kitchen* premiered at the Royal National Theatre in spring 2003, and has been produced as a television play by the BBC.

Playwright Kwame Kwei-Armah will be in-residence at Congo Square for a time during rehearsal as and again for the opening. Congo Square is proud of cultivating this relationship as the company develops its international reputation.

“What makes *Elmina's Kitchen* remarkable, however, is his ability to address all these issues without hectoring. He takes us behind the headlines from Hackney's Murder Mile, bringing a human face to London's gang violence and showing how easy it is to make the wrong choice when struggling to survive.”
—Maddy Costa, *The Guardian*

A World Premiere adaptation of
Black Nativity
by Langston Hughes, adapted by Brian Tucker
director TBA
featuring Artistic Associate Alexis Rogers
November 29, 2007-December 30, 2007
Press Opening: December 1, 2007, at 7:30 p.m.
Performances will be held at the Goodman Theatre in the Owen

Congo Square's production of ***Black Nativity*** has become a Holiday tradition in Chicago. This season, *Black Nativity* returns to the Goodman Theatre with a fresh, World Premiere adaptation about the birth of Christ. *Black Nativity* is a testament to the power of gospel music, telling the story of the Nativity through a combination of African American scripture, poetry, dance and song.

The *Chicago Sun-Times* has called Congo Square's production “a joyful and cultural collage” and the *Chicago Tribune* hailed it as “a lively, exuberant, accessible showcase...gloriously rich.”

The Chicago Premiere of
The Talented Tenth
by Richard Wesley
directed by Ensemble Member Aaron Todd Douglas
featuring Ensemble Members Daniel Bryant, Javon Johnson, Bakesta King, Ericka Ratcliff and
Artistic Associates Tracey Bonner and Allen Gilmore
February 7, 2008-March 9, 2008
Press Opening: February 9, 2008, at 8:00 p.m.

The Talented Tenth is a contemporary comedy-drama about Howard University alumni who have remained friends throughout the years. The lives of the 3 married couples in the play may just be a very far cry from W.E.B. DuBois's meaning of the “talented tenth.” These characters who were one idealistic and well-meaning have drifted to become urban professionals whose own self-interest is at the center of their lives.

“Beginning with his early plays (*The Past is the Past*, *The Last Street Play*), Mr. Wesley has had a natural gift for expansive storytelling, one reason why his long employment as a Hollywood screenwriter has been a loss for the theater. On his return, he reveals that his narrative skills are undiminished, as is his keen sense of historical perspective.”
—Mel Gussow, *The New York Times*

The World Premiere of
Sanctified
by Congo Square Ensemble Member Javon Johnson
directed by Artistic Director Derrick Sanders
Featuring Ensemble Members Aimee Bryant and Taron Patton and Artistic Associate Alexis
Rogers
April 24, 2008-May 25, 2008
Press Opening: April 26, 2007

A small black church in South Carolina standing on its last leg and its tradition is faced with the challenge of preparing a successful revival in hopes of rebuilding their reputation and congregation. A task that becomes overwhelming when their newly required and rather young interim Pastor decides to update the choir with new

ideas and instruments. His ideas prove to be a little too fast paced for the elders, even more so when the Pastor seeks assistance from his diva of all divas Sister, and gospel extraordinaire, Sister Pauletta Denise Jones. Things seem to go down hill but all may not be lost. That is if Mister and Sir, who must assist in the success of this revival in order to overcome a challenging mission of their own, are able to fulfill their calling.

Subscriptions to the 2007-08 Season are currently available through the Congo Square box office, (773) 296-1108, Monday through Friday, noon-5:00 p.m. or by mail at address. More information is available at www.congosquaretheatre.org.

Subscriptions to the 4-play season are \$60. Subscribers receive:

- One free ticket exchange per show
- Complimentary coat check
- Free Parking (except *Black Nativity*; Discounted parking is available at the Goodman is available)
- Complimentary subscription to *Time Out Chicago*, 51 issues a \$19.99 value

Curtain times for *Elmina's Kitchen and Talented Tenth* are: Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; Sundays at 3:00 p.m. **Curtain times for *Black Nativity* and *Sanctified* are:** Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; Sundays at 3:00 p.m.

Congo Square Theatre Company is an ensemble dedicated to artistic excellence. By producing definitive and transformative theatre spawned from the African Diaspora, as well as world culture, Congo Square Theatre Company seeks to establish itself as an institution of multicultural theatre.

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