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**CONGO SQUARE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS  
THE MIDWEST PREMIERE OF  
*ELMINA'S KITCHEN*  
BY BRITISH PLAYWRIGHT KWAME KWEI-ARMAH**

Chicago, IL– Congo Square Theatre Company kicks off its 2007-2008 Season with **Kwame Kwei-Armah's *Elmina's Kitchen***, directed by **Artistic Director Derrick Sanders**. The production runs from **September 13-October 14, 2007**, in Congo Square's new home at the Green Street Theatre at **The Chicago Center for the Performing Arts, 777 N. Green Street**. **The press performance is Saturday, September 15, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.**

This first major play by a young, Afro-British writer is a captivating and authentic contribution to World Theater as it examines the inheritance of British black youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 and again for the opening. Congo Square is proud of cultivating this relationship as the company develops its international reputation. Derrick Sanders is fresh off directing *King Hedley* at The Signature in New York and *Stick Fly* at True Colors in Atlanta. He heads next to direct at The Kennedy Center.

"This production is a cultural exchange that involves a bigger picture. It's not just about Congo Square; it's about Diasporatic theater. This is a universal dialogue." says Artistic Director **Derrick Sanders**. "Kwame set this piece in a London neighborhood, but this could be so many neighborhoods in Chicago."

The cast features **Phillip Brannon** (Ashley), **Willie B. Goodson** (Baygee), Ensemble member **Anthony Irons** (Deli), Ensemble member **Ann Joseph** (Anastasia), **Morocco Omari** (Digger), **Cedric Young** (Clifton).

The designers are **Nick Mozak** (scenic), **Benny Gomes** (lighting), **Christine Pascual** (costume), **Josh Hovarth** and **Ray Nardelli** (sound), and **Carol Hamre** (properties). The dialect coach is **Tanera Marshall**. **Rose Marie Packer** is the stage manager.

**Kwame Kwei-Armah** (playwright) is a British actor, playwright and singer. He first achieved fame playing the paramedic Finlay Newton in the BBC drama series *Casualty* (1999-2004). In 2003 he appeared in a charity celebrity version of the talent show *Fame Academy* and subsequently released a successful album: *Kwame*. In 1998 Kwame won the Peggy Ramsey Bursary for his play *Bitter Herb*, and became resident playwright at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre (1999-2001), where he wrote and directed a number of productions. Kwame's fifth play, *Elmina's Kitchen* (directed by Angus Jackson) opened at the National Theatre in 2003, and started its international tour as his next play *Fix-Up* followed in its footsteps in December of 2004. Following a successful tour, *Elmina's Kitchen* transferred to the Garrick Theatre in London's West End (April 2005). Kwame is currently the voice of the BBC's *Trauma UK* and *Trauma Africa 2005*, and is working on a variety of new writing commissions.

**Derrick Sanders** (director) is the Founding Artistic Director of Congo Square Theatre Company and has performed and directed across the globe. He was recently named *Chicago Tribune's* 2005 Chicagoan of

the Year: Theater. His recent credits include his Off-Broadway debut with *King Hedley II* for Signature Theatre; *Stick Fly* at True Colors in Atlanta and *Joe Turners Come and Gone*, which was produced by Congo Square at the Goodman. His other recent directorial credits include the world premiere of *Deep Azure* and the BTAA, Black Excellence and Jeff Award-winning production of *Seven Guitars*. Derrick was also a part of August Wilson's world premiere productions of *Radio Golf* and *Gem of the Ocean* on Broadway and at the Huntington Theatre, Mark Taper Forum and The Goodman. His other directing credits include the world premiere *The House that Jack Built* at Congo Square, in which he won a BTAA for Best Director and *Why Black Men Play Basketball* at ETA. He directed *A Cryin' Shame* for Kuntu Repertory Theatre, The 2002 Theodore Ward Playwriting winner *Kiwi Black* at Columbia College and the awarding-winning production of *Ali* for Congo Square. Other credits include his direction of the international classic *The Island* and performing in *A Soldier's Play*, *Playboy of the West Indies*, and *The Piano Lesson* at Congo Square. He participated in *The Pawn* and *Next Stop Ellipse* for the International Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa. He received his training from Howard University (B.F.A) and the University of Pittsburgh (M.F.A). His next project will be August Wilson's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Cycle at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Previews for *Elmina's Kitchen* are **September 13 and 14, 2007**. **The opening press performance is on Saturday, September 15, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.** The production runs through **October 14, 2007**. Curtain times are Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; and Sundays at 3:00 p.m.

Ticket prices are \$16.50-\$32.50 (\$10 students on Thursdays and Fridays) and are available at the **Chicago Center for the Performing Arts** box office, 777 N. Green St., [www.theaterland.com](http://www.theaterland.com); **312-733-6000**.

**For more information on *Elmina's Kitchen* and Congo Square Theatre Company, visit [www.congosquaretheatre.org](http://www.congosquaretheatre.org) or call Congo Square at 773-296-1108.** Subscriptions are currently available for the 2007-08 season: 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. Subscriptions to the 4-play season are \$60.

**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.

(more/fact sheet)

### **Elmina's Kitchen / Fact Sheet**

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

Title: ***Elmina's Kitchen***  
Playwright: **Kwame Kwei-Armah**  
Directed by: Founding Artistic Director **Derrick Sanders**  
Featuring: **Phillip Brannon** (Ashley), **Willie B. Goodson** (Baygee), Ensemble member **Anthony Irons** (Deli), Ensemble member **Ann Joseph** (Anastasia), **Morocco Omari** (Digger), **Cedric Young** (Clifton).  
Dates: **Previews:** September 13-14, 2007  
**Press opening:** September 15, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.  
**Regular run:** September 16-October 14, 2007  
Schedule: **Thursdays-Fridays:** 8:00 p.m.  
**Saturdays:** 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.  
**Sundays:** 3:00 p.m.  
Location: **Green Street Theatre at The Chicago Center for the Performing Arts**  
**777 N. Green Street**  
Box Office: **Buy online at theaterland.com**  
**by phone at 312-733-6000**  
**or at The Chicago Center for the Performing Arts**  
Prices: \$27.50 (Thurs, Fri, Sun)  
\$32.50 Saturdays; Target is sponsoring two-for-one Saturday matinees  
Tickets for students with ID on Thursdays and Fridays are \$10.  
Parking: Street parking available; Parking lot is \$8, valet parking available

### **Notes of Interest:**

- Playwright **Kwame Kwei-Armah** will be in-residence at Congo Square for a time during rehearsal and again for the opening and will be available for interviews. His next visit to Chicago will be September 11-16, 2007.
- Congo Square is proud of cultivating the relationship with Kwame Kwei-Armah as the company develops its national and international reputation.
- **Derrick Sanders** is fresh off directing *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* at the Goodman, King *Hedley* at The Signature in New York and *Stick Fly* at True Colors in Atlanta. He heads next to direct *Joe Turner* at Center Stage in Baltimore and to the Kennedy Center to direct three August Wilson one-act readings.
- *Elmina's Kitchen* is the first part of a triptych. The third part will be produced this season at London's Royal National Theatre, where *Elmina's Kitchen* premiered in 2003.
- Kwame wrote *Elmina's Kitchen* as a love song to his eldest son to talk about responsibility.
- *Elmina's Kitchen* won The Evening Standard's Charles Wintour Award for Most Promising Playwright and was nominated for a Laurence Olivier award for Best New Play 2003. It was produced and aired on BBC Radio 3 and BBC FOUR.
- Kwame is a regular presenter on BBC's *Culture Show* and cultural critic on *Newsnight Review*. He's perhaps best known in Britain for his role in BBC's *Casualty*, a role he played from 1999 to 2004, and for taking part in Comic Relief's 2003 Celebrity Fame Academy; He didn't win the show but he did win a recording contract and many admirers for his soul vocals.

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