



NEWS RELEASE

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ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS IDRIS GOODWIN'S BREAK BEAT PLAY, "THE REALNESS, IN A DIGITAL PERFORMANCE, NOV. 18-22

Arizona Theatre Company's (ATC) digital season continues with Idris Goodwin's break beat play, *The Realness*, which follows T.O. from the suburbs to the big city to immerse himself in authentic hip hop culture and the journey for his heart and true identity.

"Hip Hop is so much more than a musical genre. It is a cultural expression of both pride and social consciousness," said ATC Associate Artistic Director Chanel Bragg. "Idris Goodwin's thrilling new play is a love story that will reverberate deep within your heart."

The *Realness*, directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian, will be accessible on ATC's website (www.arizonatheatre.org) as well as on Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo from 5 p.m., Nov. 18 to 5 p.m., Nov. 22. There is no charge to view the play, but donations to Arizona Theatre Company are encouraged and will be greatly appreciated.

For T.O. (Terrell Donnell Sledge), the "real" hip hop culture doesn't get much real than Prima (Analisa Velez), an MC supporting her family. The moment he meets her, T. O. falls madly in love. But when he becomes tangled in the lies he tells to get closer to her, he's forced to ask himself: is he after real love, or fulfilling a middle-class fantasy of rap? Idris Goodwin takes on tough questions of authenticity and class collision with humor, heart, and killer rhymes in a coming-of-age tale set to the beat of hip-hop history.

The Realness also features Marcus John as Lord Style, Moya Angela as Professor Brown and others and Héctor Flores, Jr. as Roy and others. The creative team includes Sound Designer Mathew DeVore, Technology Director Ido Levran, Production Manager Becky Merold, Artistic Manager China Young and Stage Manager Alex Murphy.

For more information about these events and upcoming digital offerings at www.arizonatheatre.org.

ATC will bring live theatre back to the Temple of Music & Art in Tucson in January and the Herberger Theater Center in Phoenix in February to limited audiences with an entertaining and engaging six-show Mainstage Season chosen by Artistic Director Sean Daniels.

In addition to live theatre, ATC will release an exclusive limited-time broadcast of each performance for ticket holders uncomfortable returning to the theatre to view at home. Exclusive show broadcasts will be shot on opening night with three cameras and will be produced for at-home viewing.

Audiences for live performances will be limited to approximately 25 percent of theatre capacity, and shows will be held under strict Arizona Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-protection guidelines.

The season opens with ATC Artistic Director Daniels directing the delightful award-winning musical, ***My 80-Year-Old Boyfriend***, created by Charissa Bertels, Christian Duhamel and Edward Bell, Jan. 23-Feb. 13 in Tucson and Feb. 18-March 7 in Phoenix.

It will be followed by a new musical about Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sandra Day O'Connor, the first two women to serve on the United States Supreme Court, ***Justice A Musical***, written by Lauren Gunderson, with lyrics by Kait Kerrigan and music by Brian Lowdermilk, March 13 to April 3 in Tucson and April 8-25 in Phoenix; ***Nina Simone: Four Women***, written by Christina Ham, directed by Tiffany Nichole Greene, April 24-May 15 in Tucson, May 20-June 6 in Phoenix; ***Women in Jeopardy!***, Wendy MacLeod's riotous comedy, directed by Daniels, Tucson June 5-26 and in Phoenix July 1-8; ***how to make an American Son***, by ATC Artistic Associate christopher oscar peña, directed by Kimberly Senior, a co-production with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Tucson July 17-August 7 and in Phoenix Aug. 12-29; and ***The Legend of Georgia McBride***, written by Matthew Lopez and directed by Meredith McDonough, Tucson Sept. 25-Oct. 16 and in Phoenix Oct. 21-Nov. 7.

BIOS

Idris Goodwin (Playwright; he/him) is a creative voice for change impassioned by the power of art for social good. He uses story to inspire and incite new audiences across culture and generation. His critically acclaimed plays like *And In This Corner Cassius Clay*, *How We Got On* and *Hype Man : a break beat play* are widely produced across the country at professional theatres, college campuses and non-traditional spaces alike. He's been honored to receive commissions and developmental support from institutions like The Kennedy Center, The Eugene O'Neill Conference, Oregon Shakespeare Festival's American Revolutions Series, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, and Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor Residency. He's currently writing *Scarfoot Lives*, a new play co commissioned by Arena Stage's Power Play Program and The Playwright Center's McKnight Fellowship. In addition to the recently released poetry collection *Can I Kick It?*, he's had several publications with Haymarket Books including *Inauguration*, *Human Highlight: Ode To Dominique Wilkins* and the controversial play *This Is Modern Art* co-written with Kevin Coval. His words, voice and sometimes entire body, have shown up on HBO Def Poetry, Sesame Street, NPR, BBC radio, and the Discovery Channel. Idris is the Director of The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College. A frequent public speaker at conferences and educational spaces, Idris is

one of the leading voices in his field, committed to using art to cultivate more diverse and equitable spaces. Visit Idris on the web and social media.

Megan Sandberg-Zakian (Director; she/her) is a theater director with a passion for the development of diverse new American plays & playwrights, and a co-founder of Maia Directors, a consulting group for artists and organizations engaging with stories from the Middle East and beyond. Her book *There Must Be Happy Endings: On a Theatre of Optimism and Honesty* is available from The 3rd Thing Press. Megan is a graduate of Brown University and holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College. She lives in Jamaica Plain, MA, with her wife Candice. megansz.com.

Terrell Donnell Sledge (Thomas, aka T.O; he/him), is a dual ivy leaguer who embodies the visionary agency for the creation of conscientious artistic expressions that influence social connectedness in ways that facilitate the reimagining of values in order to harness emotional intelligence, healthy communication, cultural integrity, as well as individual and collective power. Drawing on his many passions and experience in expressive arts, non-profit community development and writing, some of Terrell's past and current work includes [writing] *Pride: Mortal BEINGS* pt 1 (theatrical), *SOUL*, *The Graphic Novel*, *Blesser Watts* (fiction), upcoming animated projects [education and mentorship] *Re-imagining and Elevating: Artistic Concepts and Talent (RE:ACT)*, *Quarantine Complex*, partnerships with Trinity College, Point Loma Nazarene University, UCSB and Grossmont Community College. #storyistheanswer More info: www.terrelldonnellsledge.com | ig: @soul_thegraphichovel | www.reactcollective.org

Analisa Velez (Prima; she/her) recent credits include *The Purists* (Elliot Norton Award), TV: @Monsterland, @SneakyPete, @almostlovemovie

Marcus John (Lord Style; he/him) Broadway Tours: *Hamilton: An American Musical* (swing), *Rent* 20th Anniversary (Benny), *Mamma Mia!* (Ensemble); NY/Regional Theatre: *iLLA* (NYMF), *Kill Move Paradise* (Interact Theatre Co.), *Jungle Book* (Arden Theatre Co.) BFA: The University of the Arts, "Pray Often, Worry Not!" @BroadwyBriddell

Moya Angela (Prof Brown & others; she/her) is an international Broadway singer and actress and teacher. Got her Broadway start in *The Lion King* on Broadway. Other Broadway credits include Effie in *Dreamgirls* National Broadway Tour and the Apollo, *Ghost the Musical* and *InTransit the Musical*. TV credits include *America's Got Talent* and Portia in *30 Rock*. She is an NAACP Award winner and a LA Ovation Awards for her role of Effie White in *Dreamgirls*. She went to school at Kentucky State University for music education and acting. Currently she is taking some time to teach and do more outreach work and philanthropy.

Héctor Flores, Jr (Roy, and others) is excited to continue creating theatre during this time! Previous favorite theatre credits include *In The Heights*, *On Your Feet*, *The Bodyguard* and *AltarBoyz*. Flores has been seen on TV in episodes of *Full Frontal W/ Samantha Bee* and was ranked top 5 in the world in several categories at the Fred Astaire World Ballroom Championships. Additionally Hector is one third of the Urban Contemporary music group known as **The Koll3ctive** with songs available wherever you stream music. Hector is the president of Theatre Barn Records, an imprint of Broadway Records dedicated to recording and releasing concept albums of musicals in development. @HectorFloresJr35 @TheKOLL3CTIVE @NewYorkTheatreBarn.

FACT SHEET

The Realness

Written by Idris Goodwin

Directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian

Viewing Dates: 5 p.m., Nov. 18 to 5 p.m. Nov. 22

Viewing Options

ATC website (www.arizonatheatre.org), YouTube channel, Facebook and Vimeo.

CREATIVE TEAM

Technical Director: Ido Levran

Sound Design: Mathew DeVore
Artistic Manager: China Young
Production Manager: Becky Merold
SM Intern: Nick Carroll
Stage Manager: Alex Murphy

Contact:

Steve Carr, The Kur Carr Group, Inc., (602) 317-3040

About Arizona Theatre Company:

Under new leadership and now celebrating its 54th Season, Arizona Theatre Company is truly “The State Theatre,” with the largest subscriber base of any performing arts organization in Arizona. More than 130,000 people each year attend performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix.

Each season of high-quality productions reflects the rich variety of world theatre – from classic to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works – and audiences enjoy the rich emotional experience and joy that can only be captured through live theatre. ATC is the preeminent professional theatre in the state of Arizona. Under the direction of Artistic Director Sean Daniels and Managing Director Geri Wright, ATC operates in two cities – unlike any other League of Resident Theaters (LORT) company in the country.

ATC shares the passion of the theatre through a wide array of outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives and community events. With more than 800 Education & Engagement activities through schools and summer programs, ATC focuses on teaching Arizona’s youth about the creative power of dramatic literature and how it can enrich their own lives in multiple ways

ATC reaches far beyond the metropolitan areas of Tucson and Phoenix, enriching the theatre learning experience nationally for current and future audiences.