

NEWS FROM PENUMBRA THEATRE

Contact: Julie McGarvie, Director of Marketing
651-288-6784 or julie.mcgarvie@penumbratheatre.org



Tickets: Penumbra Theatre Box Office at 651-224-3180 or penumbratheatre.org

Penumbra Theatre Announces Special Presentation

I Wish You Love by Dominic Taylor

Directed by Lou Bellamy

Due to popular demand—16 performances added to the 2011-2012 season!

Tuesday, May 3, 2011; St. Paul, MN: Penumbra Theatre Company, the nation's preeminent African American theatre, announces a special presentation of *I Wish You Love* in the 2011-2012 season. Due to popular demand, 16 performances will be staged at Penumbra Theatre **November 18 – December 4, 2011**. Details included in the quick reference below.

“This is the first time in Penumbra’s history that we are not able to extend a show due to popular demand. Immediately following the run at Penumbra, the show will be presented at the Kennedy Center, and then at the Hartford Stage in Connecticut. It is important that our home town audiences get a chance to see it, and the first opportunity available is November, 2011,” says Artistic director, Lou Bellamy. “We are proud of this production and grateful that critics and audiences have deemed it a “must-see show.” We are thrilled to bring it back!”

The production features **Dennis W. Spears** as Nat “King” Cole, singing over 20 of Mr. Cole’s beloved songs. The cast also includes **Kevin D. West** (Oliver Moore), **Eric Berryman** (Jeffrey Prince), and **Michael Tezla** (Bill Henry).

I Wish You Love is a drama with music about a moment in the life of Nat “King” Cole. The play uses Cole’s television show as a way to illustrate the man, the times, and the real life drama behind the sanitizing lens of the television camera. In 1957, President Eisenhower had the Civil Rights Act on his desk that he may or may not sign. Althea Gibson had won Wimbledon. Nine children were about to integrate Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas. And, Nat “King” Cole was the first black man that many in America let into their living room as they swooned to his tunes, including “Get Your Kicks on Route 66” and “Let There Be Love.” Cole came to the forefront of American life as the storm clouds of the modern civil rights era grew. Still, he believed that with enough talent and persistence he would be judged on the content of his character as opposed to the color of his skin. This production will be relevant to all ages and engage everyone in a dialogue about the power of advocacy – and how it can create change.

The artistic team also includes Lance Brockman (Scenic Designer), Don Darnutzer (Lighting Designer), Mathew J. LeFebvre (Costume Designer), Martin Gwinup (Sound and Video Designer), Sanford Moore (Musical Director), and Mary K. Winchell (Stage Manager).

2010-2011 Season Presenters: Star Tribune, Minnesota Monthly and Minnesota Public Radio

I Wish You Love was developed in OKRA, the Penumbra new play development program, with support from Travelers. This Play was originally produced with the assistance of The Kennedy Center's Fund for New American Plays.

PENUMBRA THEATRE was founded in 1976 by Lou Bellamy to make socially responsible art – art that demanded a response, art with intent, art that could create change. At a time when roles for black artists were limited to stereotypes and comical representations, Penumbra produced theater that roared with authenticity through the unrestrained and rich voice of black artists and playwrights. This respect for cultural authenticity became Penumbra's signature style – and demand for it has reached new heights from theatres around the country fostering collaborations, new productions, tours and awards. For the latest news and updates, visit www.penumbratheatre.org.

OKRA, the Penumbra Theatre new play program was launched in 2008-- a rigorous culturally specific program where playwrights can develop their plays in a safe, nurturing environment without restriction or reservation. The program has three components dedicated to play development – the expansion of early ideas, the exploration of a play script, and a developmental workshop to share the script with an audience. The ultimate goal of OKRA is to move a new play onto the main stage. Each year, we conduct Word(s)Play!, an intense development workshop for playwrights to refine completed scripts with the help of actors, directors, designers and musicians – readying it for full production. Penumbra has nurtured three plays that have received further production opportunities at New York Theatre Workshop and LAByrinth Theatre Company in New York City; Providence Black Rep in Providence, Rhode Island; and American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, California. Word(s)Play! has quickly gained critical acclaim within the industry for the caliber of the playwrights involved and the complexity of the works selected. The program receives generous support from the Jerome Foundation.

THE KENNEDY CENTER FUND FOR NEW AMERICAN PLAYS has awarded grants totaling nearly \$4 million to more than 126 playwrights, 61 not-for-profit theaters across the country, and 135 new works throughout its history. The Fund awarded grants to Pulitzer Prize winners Tony Kushner for *Angels in America*, Robert Schenkkan for *The Kentucky Cycle*, and Wendy Wasserstein for *The Heidi Chronicles*. Recent grants include Don DeLillo's *Love-Lies-Bleeding* presented with The Steppenwolf Theatre Company; Emily Mann's *Mrs. Packard*, presented with the McCarter Theatre Company; Julie Marie Myatt's *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter* with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; Michael John LaChiusa's *Giant* with Virginia's Signature Theatre; and *Golden Age* with Philadelphia Theatre Company.

MORE

QUICK REFERENCE

Production: *I Wish You Love*
Playwright: Dominic Taylor
Producer: Penumbra Theatre Company and Lou Bellamy
Director: Lou Bellamy
Musical Director: Sanford Moore
Stage Manager: Mary K. Winchell

Cast: Dennis W. Spears (Nat Cole), Kevin D. West (Oliver Moore), Eric Berryman (Jeffrey Prince) and Michael Tezla (Bill Henry).

Design Team: Lance Brockman (Scenic Designer), Don Darnutzer (Lighting Designer), Martin Gwinup (Sound and Video Designer), Mathew J. LeFebvre (Costume Designer).

Dates: November 18 -- December 4, 2011
Opening Night, November 18 at 7:30pm

Performances: **Wednesdays through Sundays at 7:30pm**
Sunday matinees at 2:00pm
NOTE: Wednesday, November 23. 10:00am performance only.
There will be no performance on Thursday, November 24.

Tickets: 651-224-3180 or penumbratheatre.org

Price: **Adult single \$40; Students \$10**
This is special presentation and will not be part of the season ticket package.

Theatre Location: 270 North Kent Street, Saint Paul, MN 55102

Media Contact: Julie McGarvie, Marketing Director
Penumbra Theatre Company
651-288-6784 or julie.mcgarvie@penumbratheatre.org

MORE

ARTIST BIOS:

ERIC BERRYMAN (Jeffrey Prince) is making his Penumbra stage debut. Mr. Berryman appeared in Kuntu Rep's *Radio Golf* where he was named one of the top Pittsburgh performers of 2010. Other notable performances include *The History Boys* with the Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre, and the staged reading of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, directed by Lou Bellamy at The Kennedy Center. He is a recent graduate of Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama where he was seen in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Slow Dance on the Killing Ground*.

DENNIS W. SPEARS (Nat Cole) is a Penumbra Theatre Company member and has performed in *Black Nativity: Now's the Time*, *Black Nativity: A Season for Change*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Blue*, and *Get Ready*. Last season, Mr. Spears embarked on a tour in *Crowns*, a co-production of Indiana Repertory Theatre and Syracuse Stage. No stranger to jazz, Spears has performed nationally and internationally and is an original vocalist with Moore by Four. He has three solo recordings to his credit, is Creative Artistic Director for The Capri Theater, and produces a very exciting *Legends* music series.

MICHAEL TEZLA (Bill Henry/Anchor/Announcer) was most recently seen in the Penumbra production of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Other select credits: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* at Goodman Theatre; *The Wild Duck*, *The Front Page*, *Hamlet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *A Christmas Carol* at Guthrie Theater; *Tartuffe* and *You Never Can Tell* at Court Theatre; *The Chosen*, and *Taking Sides* at Park Square. Film: *A Serious Man*, *Holiday Beach*, *The Quietest Sound* and *World and Time Enough*. Television: *Chicago Story*, *All My Children*, *Another World* and *The Guiding Light*.

KEVIN D. WEST (Oliver Moore) recently directed *Fences* at Metropolitan State University and *The Colored Museum* at Minneapolis Community Technical College. Select Penumbra acting credits: *Radio Golf*, *Fences*, *Zooman and the Sign*, *Two Trains Running*, *Some Place Soft to Fall*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Seven Guitars*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *Freefall*. Other credits include: Children's Theater Company, Jungle Theater, Mixed Blood Theater, Pillsbury House Theater, Alchemy Theater, History Theater, Theater Latte' Da, Minnesota Jewish Theater, and the Guthrie Theater. Film: *Tommy Grimes*, *Sweet Caroline*, *Bill's Gun Shop* and *Justice*.

LOU BELLAMY (Director) is the founder and artistic director of Penumbra theatre, an Obie award-winning stage director, and an associate professor at the University of Minnesota. Select Penumbra directing credits: *Two Old Black Guys Just Sitting Around Talking*, *Black Pearl Sings!*, *Radio Golf*, *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*, *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Gem of the Ocean*. Other credits: *Two Trains Running* at the Signature Theatre Company in New York, *Jitney* at Kansas City Repertory Theatre and Arizona Theatre Company, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at the Kennedy Center. Most recently, he directed the Penumbra and Arizona Theatre Company co-production of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* staged at Arizona Theatre Company in Phoenix and Tucson, and in Minneapolis at the Guthrie Theatre.

DOMINIC TAYLOR (Playwright) is the associate artistic director of Penumbra Theatre, head of Penumbra's OKRA New Play Development Program, and an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota. Select directing credits: *Black Nativity: A Season for Change* at Penumbra, *Fresh Faust* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, *The Negroes Burial Ground* at the Kitchen, N.Y.C., and *Uppa Creek* at Dixon Place. His published plays include *Wedding Dance*, *Personal History* and *UpCity Service(s)*. Mr. Taylor has also worked with Crossroads Theatre, Rites and Reasons Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, The Public Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, and Ensemble Studio Theatre.

SARAH BELLAMY (Education Director) has designed several programs that engage participants in critical thinking, dialogue and action around issues of race and social justice. Select programs include: "RACE Workshop: Meet Your Metaphor," curated to accompany the Science Museum of Minnesota's exhibit *RACE: Are We So Different?*, and Penumbra's Summer Institute, a theatre-training program for youth to practice socially responsible art and civic engagement. Ms. Bellamy is currently working toward her doctorate in Comparative Studies and Discourse in Society at the University of Minnesota.

SANFORD MOORE (Musical Director) has several Penumbra credits that include: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Get Ready*, *Blue*, *Black Nativity: Now's the Time*, and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Other select credits include: *Crowns*, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, *Triumph of Love*, and *As You Like It* at the Guthrie Theater and *Two Queens*, *One Castle* at Mixed Blood Theatre. Sanford is an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota School of Music, and Minister of Music for Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church.

MARY K. WINCHELL (Stage Manager) is a Penumbra company member. Select Penumbra credits: *Sleep Deprivation Chamber*, *Black Pearl Sings!*, *Radio Golf*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Get Ready*, *Seven Guitars*, *Jitney*, and *Two Trains Running*. Other stage management credits: Orpheum Theatre, State Theatre, Pantages Theatre, Children's Theatre Company, The Jungle Theater and the Coconut Grove Playhouse. She served as production stage manager for Macy's *Glamorama*, Dorothy Hamill's *Nutcracker on Ice*, Aveda's 20th Anniversary Celebration at Radio City Music Hall, and Super Bowl xxvi *Winter Magic*.

C. LANCE BROCKMAN (Scenic Designer) has designed eight shows for Penumbra including *On the Open Road*, *Rollin' on the T.O.B.A.*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *REDSHIRTS*, *Get Ready*, *Fences* and *Black Pearl Sings*. Mr. Brockman is a faculty member of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance at the University of Minnesota. His research interest is in historic scenic painting used to create illusionary scenery for opera houses, vaudeville and fraternal stages. He teaches master classes on the historical painting methods utilized by scenic artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century at universities across the country.

DON DARNUTZER (Lighting Designer) most recently designed for Penumbra *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. He has designed the lighting for Broadway's *It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues* and Off-Broadway's *Hank Williams: Lost Highway*, *Almost Heaven* and *The Immigrant*. He also worked for the American Conservatory Theatre, The Guthrie Theater, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Cleveland Play House, New Orleans Opera, Denver Center Theatre Company, Portland Opera, New Orleans Opera, Kansas City Repertory, Alley Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, BB King's Blues Club, Palm Beach Opera, The Shakespeare Theatre, Saint Louis Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Coconut Grove Playhouse and Geva Theatre.

MARTIN GWINUP (Sound & Video Designer) has designed several productions for Penumbra including *Sleep Deprivation Chamber*, *REDSHIRTS*, *Fences*, and *Black Pearl Sings!* He has been a freelance sound and video designer for over 22 years, and has worked locally for Frank Theatre, History Theatre, Children's Theatre Company, Cricket Theatre, Round House Theatre, Trinity Theatre, and Eye of the Storm. Mr. Gwinup is an associate professor in the Theatre Arts and Dance Department at the University of Minnesota.

MATHEW LEFEBVRE (Costume Designer) has designed fifteen productions for Penumbra including *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Two Old Black Guys Just Sitting Around Talking*, *A Raisin in The Sun*, *Fences*, *Get Ready*, and *Gem of the Ocean* (scenery and costumes). Other regional credits include: the Guthrie Theater: Kansas City Rep, American Players Theatre, Geffen Playhouse, Minnesota Opera, Children's Theatre Company, Cleveland Play House, Trinity Rep, Arizona Theatre Company, The Joyce, The Acting Company, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, and Mixed Blood Theatre. Off-Broadway credits include: Signature Theatre, *Two Trains Running* and New York Theatre Workshop, *Bach at Leipzig*.

2010-2011 Season Presenters: Star Tribune, Minnesota Monthly and Minnesota Public Radio

###