

NEWS FROM PENUMBRA THEATRE

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LIBRARIES ACQUIRE INSTITUTIONAL ARCHIVE OF PENUMBRA THEATRE

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL (8/7/2006) – The University of Minnesota Libraries have acquired the institutional archive of Penumbra Theatre Company, which will become part of the Givens Collection of African American Literature. The archive will include the historical documentation of the theatre as well as the personal and artistic papers of Penumbra Founder and Artistic Director Lou Bellamy, who is also on the faculty of the University's Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. Once the Penumbra archive is catalogued and processed, it will be available for research and study by the general public as well as University students, faculty and staff.

"The acquisition of Penumbra Theatre's archive into the University Libraries' collection is a major boon for researchers from the University community, from the state, and from across the globe," said Steven Rosenstone, Dean of the University's College of Liberal Arts. "Now everyone from serious scholars of the African American experience to avocational theatre buffs can experience and learn from this rich trove of primary source material. Something quite extraordinary happens when a library visitor can touch, read and examine original documents with her or his own eyes. This invaluable collection is now in the care of professional archivists here at the University, and scholars locally and worldwide are the beneficiaries."

The University Libraries' Givens Collection of African American Literature contains more than 5,000 primary source items—novels, poems, plays, diaries, and photographs--

related to African American history and culture. The Penumbra archive, which was a gift from Penumbra to the University, consists of more than 70 boxes of records and memorabilia chronicling the theatre's 30-year history, including photographs, set and costume designs and sketches, administrative records, programs, and other key documents.

"Marking the path is important," Bellamy said of the importance of Penumbra's archive. "So many people have given so much of themselves to build and maintain Penumbra. It is crucial to impart the knowledge we have gained on building community to future generations. This effort must ensure their access to the documentation that shows what we have done, that we were here, that we marked the path. It is our history."

In May 2007, Penumbra and the University Libraries will host a public event to celebrate the acquisition of the archive. Bellamy will speak at the event, and materials from the collection will be on display. The event will also be part of Penumbra's yearlong 30th anniversary celebration.

Penumbra, founded in 1976 by Artistic Director Lou Bellamy, was born of the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movement and the tenet that an artist's ethics and aesthetics must be one. Out of this comes mission driven art, art for social change, art that is critical, forceful and demands response - art that creates and sustains a community. Under Bellamy's continuous leadership, Penumbra has garnered critical acclaim for creating an authentic voice and style for African American theatre and achieved national recognition as a pioneer in cross-cultural dialogue. Penumbra's mission is to create professional productions that are artistically excellent, thought provoking, relevant, and illuminate the human condition through the prism of the African American experience.

The University of Minnesota Libraries are among the university's and the state's greatest intellectual and capital assets. Housed in 14 facilities on the three Twin Cities campuses, the University Libraries' collections contain more than six million print volumes, making it the 16th largest research library in North America.