

NEWS FROM PENUMBRA THEATRE

For Immediate Release

September 18, 2006

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Tickets: Penumbra Theatre Box Office
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Ain't Misbehavin'
The Fats Waller Musical Show
Stride Piano, Harlem Renaissance, America's Greatest Jazz

September 18, 2006; St. Paul, MN: Penumbra Theatre Company, the nation's preeminent African American theatre, proudly announces the opening of *Ain't Misbehavin'--The Fats Waller Musical Show* conceived by Richard Maltby, Jr., directed and choreographed by Patdro Harris with musical direction by Sanford Moore on **Thursday, September 28, 2006.**

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of burgeoning creativity, cultural awareness and pride. It was also the Golden Age for venues like The Cotton Club and The Savoy Ballroom; a time when the dives along Lenox Avenue were ablaze from stride piano players banging out the new beat, swing. One of the most prolific musicians of the time and an originator of swing music was Thomas "Fats" Waller, a formidable composer and pianist with a legendary lust for life. "Ain't Misbehavin'" was one of his most popular recordings, done in 1930 on Broadway. The stage show of *Ain't Misbehavin'* is a vibrant musical revue and tribute to the black musicians of the early 1900s. Bold, bright and told with the cheeky humor for which Fats Waller was known, *Ain't Misbehavin'* is sure to bring the house down!

"Waller's music had the great ability to allow us to laugh in the face of a mountain of problems with songs like "Lookin Good and Feelin Bad," "That Ain't Right," "Find Out How They Like It," and so many more. Now in 2006, here at Penumbra Theatre, we have this wonderful musical, *Ain't Misbehavin'*. This show features the Twin Cities finest, all underscored by the fingers of Sanford Moore and the band. -- Patdro Harris, Director and Choreographer.

This musical revue honors and celebrates the historic age of rent parties, the Lindy Hop and The Charleston, bootleggers, stride piano, and the infamous jazz legend, Thomas "Fats" Waller. During this era, it was Fats Waller and His Rhythm (the name of his band) that ushered in a new approach to jazz piano called "stride," and who made history in 1942 when he became the first jazz soloist to play Carnegie Hall. *Ain't Misbehavin'* pays tribute to his legacy and music, and includes the ever popular songs: "The Jitterbug Waltz," "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter," " 'T Ain't Nobody's Biz-ness If I Do."

Penumbra's production features a star studded cast that includes: **Aimee K. Bryant, Thomasina Petrus, T. Mychael Rambo, Xavier Rice, Dennis Spears, Jevetta Steele and Austene Van.**

AIMEE K. BRYANT is a co-founding ensemble member of Congo Square Theatre in Chicago. After graduating from Howard University she moved to the Twin Cities where she has been building a lengthy theatre resume. She is excited to be returning to Penumbra for *Ain't Misbehavin*. Other Penumbra productions Aimee has performed in are *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Jar the Floor*, *Black Nativity*, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, and *Con Flama*.

THOMASINA PETRUS has been performing as an equity actor for the last 15 years, portraying lead characters on Penumbra, Mixed Blood, Illusion, and Old Arizona Theatre stages. She has cultivated her talents as an actor and jazz vocalist through mentorship and friendship with some of the Twin Cities most beloved artists. She has performed with James "Cornbread" Harris, Sr., Jevetta Steele, Stokley, Regina Williams, Prince, T. Mychael Rambo, and Lou Bellamy. Thomasina established her own production company where her first production *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, by Lanie Robertson allowed her to portray Billie Holiday, her musical muse. Her tribute CD "If Only...Billie Unsung" continues to sell locally and worldwide. Thomasina can be seen performing throughout the Twin Cities in local jazz venues. She is looking forward to her February 2007 production of "Hot Chocolate," her annual Valentine's Day concert.

T. MYCHAEL RAMBO is an actor, vocalist, and educator. T. Mychael has performed at Penumbra since 1989, and has been seen in *Zooman and the Sign*, *Dinah Was*, *Tambourines to Glory*, *Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope*, *Spunk*, *Last Minstrel Show*, *Jitney*, and several performances of *Black Nativity*. He has also performed with Guthrie Theatre, Illusion Theatre, Minnesota Opera, Ordway Music Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre, Park Square Theatre and Hey City Theatre. T. Mychael has also performed with a number of regional theatre companies, several national and regional tours, and internationally throughout Canada, Europe, Africa and Brazil. Television credits include: national and local commercials, the HBO mini-series *Laurel Avenue*, *Endeavor*, and *I Led Two Lives*. Film credits include: *Mighty Ducks*, *Crossing the Bridge*, *Grumpy Old Men*, *The Cure*, *Equinox*, *Wooly Boys* and *Justice*, winner of several national independent film festival awards and nominated for a NAACP Image Award.

XAVIER RICE is appearing on the Penumbra Theatre stage for the first time. Other theatre credits include Hud in *Hair* at Pantages, Nice-Nicely in *Guys and Dolls* at Paul Bunyan Playhouse, and as Ed Bishop in *Floyd Collins* with Theatre Latte Da. Xavier will be back with Penumbra this Christmas for *Black Nativity-- A Homecoming*. He can also be seen in January during his one-man show, *I Can't Believe I set my Alarm for This!* at the Bryant Lake Bowl.

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DENNIS W. SPEARS Back at Penumbra, Dennis has recently worked with Actor's Theatre of Louisville in *Ain't Misbehavin'*, The Guthrie Theatre in *Crowns*, and Hey City Theatre in *Smokey Joe's Café*. An accomplished jazz vocalist, Dennis made his splash in jazz as a featured vocalist with jazz vocal ensemble, Moore By Four. Minnesota Jazz Music Awards named him "Best Male Jazz Male Vocalist." He has performed in jazz festivals nationally and internationally with such legends as: Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Joe Williams, Carmen McCrae and Dee Dee Bridgewater. After two successful solo recordings *I Hear It* and *Why Try to Change Me Now*, his first National release, *Evening Candlelight* (romantic ballads) hits Target stores everywhere on October 8th.

JEVETTA STEELE is a singer, actor, and playwright. She wrote the autobiographical musical *Two Queens One Castle*, which premiered to critical acclaim at Mixed Blood Theater before being produced in Atlanta & Washington, DC. She has appeared in numerous productions around the Twin Cities including *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Crowns*, *Bill Of Rights* & *Constant Star* to name a few. She appeared on Broadway and the National/International tour of *Gospel At Colonus*. She received an Academy Award nomination for her performance of "Calling You" from the film *Bagdad Cafe*. She is featured in the film/soundtrack of *Corrina-Corrina*, *Born To Be Wild*, *Graffiti Bridge* and *Hoop Dreams*. Steele has recorded two solo CDs. Steele will return to France, October 2006, to resume the lead role as Brenda in *Bagdad Cafe, The Musical*. While an active partner in the musical family, "The Steeles," her voice can be heard with legendary artist, Mavis Staples, Prince, George Clinton, Kirk Whalum and The Sounds Of Blackness.

AUSTENE VAN is a Penumbra Theatre Company member. Select Penumbra credits include *Zooman and the Sign*, *Dinah Was*, *The Trial*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, and several productions of *Black Nativity*. She also performed in Penumbra's co-production with the Guthrie of *The Darker Face of the Earth*. Other stage credits include *Smokey Joe's Café*, *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* and *Once on This Island* at the Children's Theatre Company, *Two Queens One Castle*, and *Vices* at Mixed Blood, *Crowns* and *A Christmas Carol* at the Guthrie, *The Colored Museum* and *Spunk* at The Saint Louis Black Repertory Theatre, and *Hair* at Pantages. Television credits include *Vernie* and *The Shakedown*. Austene has performed throughout the United States and internationally as a singer, dancer and actress. Musical endeavors include singing on tour with Karyn White, and writing and co-producing her own album.

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PATDRO HARRIS (Director & Choreographer) has worked with Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Kennedy Center, Alliance Theater, Studio Theater D.C., City Theater Pittsburgh, The San Diego Repertory Theater Company, Tribeca Performing Arts Center, Mixed Blood Theater, Theatrical Outfit, Jomandi Productions, The Sacramento Theater Company, Guthrie Theater, The National Black Theater Festival, and The National Black Arts Festival. Recently, he conceived and directed the one man play *America, The Black, The Beautiful*, and choreographed the Tony Award-winning Broadway hit, *A Raisin in the Sun*. He has performed as the lead dancer and choreographer for Stevie Wonder, Technotronic, the SOS Band, TC Carson, and Daryl Coley. Film and television credits include work with TNN, BET, MTV, Soul Train, PBS documentary “Dance Black America,” Time-Warner’s “Nitro Girls,” Brand Atlanta’s tourism commercials, and the recent film, “The Gospel.” Awards and nominations include the 1996 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Choreography, a nomination for the Helen Hayes Award for Best Supporting Actor, 2002 Drammy Award, and nominations in two categories for a 1998 Audelco Award.

SANFORD MOORE (Musical Director/Pianist) Musical Direction credits include: *Crowns, Dream on Monkey Mountain, Triumph of Love, As You Like It* (Guthrie Theater); *Rollin on the T.O.B.A., Dinah Was* (Penumbra Theater); *2 Queens 1 Castle* (Mixed Blood Theater, in Minneapolis, MN and at Horizon Theater, Atlanta, GA.); *The Last Minstrel Show* (History Theater); *Smokey Joe’s Café* (Hey City Theater), Co-Creator of *Always and Forever, 2-Gether and Living Beauty* (Illusion Theater). Sanford is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Music and Minister of Music for Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church.

C. LANCE BROCKMAN (Scenic Design) is a Professor of theatre design at the University of Minnesota where he has been on the faculty of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance for 34 years. His research interest is in the historic methods of scenic art used to create illusionary background for opera houses, vaudeville, circuses, and fraternal initiations. His efforts led to the discovery and subsequent exhibits titled: *The Twin City Scenic Collection: Popular Entertainment 1895-1929* and *Theatre of the Fraternity: Staging the Ritual Space of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry 1896-1929*. Both exhibits and national tours were supported by grants from the National Endowment of the Humanities. In addition, Lance nationally provides master classes and workshops on historical painting techniques and maintains an active design career. Brockman is a member of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology—a professional organization that represents 3500 designer and technicians from North America.

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MARK DOUGHERTY (Light Design) has been the Lighting Supervisor and Facilities Manager at Penumbra Theatre for the past five years. Penumbra designs include: *On the Open Road*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Two Trains Running*, *King Hedley II*, *Dinah Was*, and *Slippery When Wet*. He works as an Electrician at the Guthrie Theatre and The Children's Theatre. Mark has also designed at Theatre L' Homme Dieu, Guthrie Theatre 'Lab', and The Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson, WI. He is a graduate of St. Cloud State University.

MARTIN GWINUP (Sound Design) is an associate professor in the Theatre Arts and Dance Department at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. He teaches Audio and Video Design and Production. He has also worked in the Twin Cities area as a freelance sound/video designer and technician for the past 18 years. He has worked for companies such as the Frank Theatre, History Theatre, Children's Theatre, Cricket Theatre, and Eye of the Storm, to name a few. *Ain't Misbehavin'* will be his ninth production with Penumbra Theatre Company. Recent design at Penumbra include, *Black Nativity—A Celebration of Family*, *A Celebration for the Soul...Testify!*, *Rollin on the T.O.B.A.*, and *Grandchildren of the Buffalo Soldiers*.

REGGIE RAY (Costume Design) has designed for Al Freeman Jr., Andrea Frye, Debbie Allen, George Faison, Joy Zinoman, Kenny Leon, Michael Bobbitt, Mike Malone, Regina Taylor, Ron Himes, Sam Scalomoni, Tim Bond, and many others. He has also designed for Arena Stage, Everyman Theatre, Fords Theatre, The Guthrie Theater, The Goodman, The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Missouri Repertory Theatre, Place D'Arts, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Studio Theatre, The True Colors Theatre Company. Awards include seven Woodie King Awards, a Helen Hayes Awards for *Spunk*; Kevin Kline Award, CEA Award for *Crowns*, and two Cleveland Critics' Awards. He was also nominated for four additional Helen Hayes Awards. Celebrity Clients include Maya Angelou, Jennifer Holliday, Richard Roundtree, Karen Clark Sheard, Regina Belle, Alyson Williams, Diahann Carroll, TC Carson, Allen Payne, Tony Terry; Resident Designer and Instructor of Costume Design/Make-up for Howard University. Mr. Ray is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829/International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees [USA/IATSE].

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QUICK REFERENCE

Production: *Ain't Misbehavin' The Fats Waller Musical Show*
Conceived and Originally Directed by Richard Maltby, Jr.

Producer: Lou Bellamy

Show Sponsor: RBC Dain Rauscher

**Director &
Choreographer:** Patdro Harris

**Musical Direction
& Pianist:** Sanford Moore

Ensemble: Aimee Bryant, Thomasina Petrus, T. Mychael Rambo,
Xavier Rice, Dennis Spears, Jevetta Steele, Austene Van

Design Team: Lance Brockman (Scene Design)
Mark Dougherty (Light Design)
Martin Gwinup (Sound Design)
Reggie Ray (Costume Design)

Dates: September 28 - October 22, 2006
Previews September 26 & 27
Opening Night, Thursday, September 28, 2006 at 7:30 pm

Performances: Wednesdays 10:00am and 7:30pm
Thursdays 7:30pm
Fridays 8:00pm
Saturdays 8:00pm
Sundays 2:00pm and 7:30pm

Tickets: 651-224-3180 or penumbratheatre.org

Price: \$15 - \$30

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

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