

NEWS FROM PENUMBRA THEATRE

For Immediate Release

October 4, 2006

Contact: Julie McGarvie, Marketing Director

651-290-8686 x250 julie.mcgarvie@penumbratheatre.org

Tickets: Penumbra Theatre Box Office

651-224-3180 penumbratheatre.org



PENUMBRA CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

An accomplished body of work and a vision towards a vibrant future

October 4, 2006, St. Paul, MN: Penumbra Theatre Company, the nation's preeminent African American theatre, made a series of announcements today at its annual open house.

Penumbra will produce the entire August Wilson 10-play cycle, presenting two plays each season for the next five seasons. The 2007-2008 season will include *Gem of the Ocean* and *The Piano Lesson*. Penumbra has produced more of August Wilson's plays than any other theatre in the world. Founder and artistic director, Lou Bellamy, who is noted for his signature style and expertise with August Wilson plays has been summoned by theatres across the country to direct Wilson's work. This season he is directing *Two Trains Running* at the Signature in New York City as well as *Jitney* at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre which will also play at Arizona Theatre Company in Phoenix and Tucson.

The fiscal year ending June 30, 2006 finished in the black and received a clean opinion from the auditors for the third consecutive year. This marks the successful completion of year three in a four year restructuring effort to eliminate its debt and build capacity for a sustainable future. Kathy Adams, Treasurer and member of the Penumbra Board of Directors, provided the following highlights:

- Penumbra ended the year in the black with total net assets increasing \$20,000.
- Penumbra made additional payments to reduce its overall debt and maintained our payables current.
- Penumbra invested in the overall organization with:
 - a new integrated computer system and database manager;
 - additional dedicated fundraising and front of house staff;
 - the creation of The Baobab Family, a donor cultivation program, with 42 founding members;
 - a redesigned website with online ticket sales;
 - the completion of Phase One of theatre renovations including exterior signage.”
- The goals for year four of the restructuring effort, fiscal year ending June 30, 2007, are to raise the \$2.6 million for operating expenses and meet the following objectives:
 - Make the final payment on the remaining debt;
 - Complete Phase Two of the theatre renovations;
 - Complete the comprehensive vision planning process and new business plan;

The launch of the donor cultivation program energized the community to voice its support of Penumbra. This declaration manifested itself in the form of increased donations over the year prior otherwise known as “new monies.” In fiscal year 2005, the community donated \$270,000 in new monies. This past year, the community donated \$362,000. That's over \$630,000 in just 24 months. There is no question that this community values the mission-driven art Penumbra offers.

MORE

A comprehensive vision planning process for the future is near completion. Over the last 18 months, Penumbra's board of directors has been working a vision to institutionalize Penumbra and launch a formal educational and outreach program. The subsequent business plan will address a transition from the lean restructuring model currently employed, to a robust organization designed to sustain the vision.

A formal Education and Outreach Initiative is a vital component of the vision planning process by the board. The working title for this new initiative is "Art for Social Change, the Education Programs of Penumbra Theatre Company." The educational function invests in the founding tenets of the theatre as described by the Black Arts Movement, thereby using the drama and the issues therein to explore identity, representation and history within a framework that places the black experience at the center of the discussion and creates community. The new initiative will be directly informed by the main stage productions and all the tools – study guides, talk backs, symposia, ambassador program and summer institute for example – will be integrated and fully accountable for quantitative and qualitative results. The program will include accreditation for teachers and students.

The development of this initiative is being led by Dr. Reatha Clark King and Dr. Josie Johnson. A working committee is currently being formed which will include members of the board and the academic and artistic communities. The new initiative will be unveiled on May 16th at a special event to be held at the University of Minnesota. The event will introduce the Penumbra archives, which are now a part of the Givens Collection of African American Literature. It will also bring together members of the educational community to experience how the Penumbra initiative and the Givens Collection can enrich curriculum and teacher development.

Kimberly Morgan, the 2006 recipient of the Kathryn Corum Gagnon Fellowship in Musical and Dramatic Theatre, is an actor, dancer, playwright, and a Minnesota State Arts Board Teaching Artist. This annual fellowship recognizes an African American woman in residence at Penumbra Theatre Company and provides assistance and support for further study in the field of musical and dramatic theatre. Morgan received the 2005 Ivey Award for her work in *Hot Comb: Brandin' One Mark of Oppression*, a one-woman show which premiered at Pillsbury House Theatre. The Star Tribune named her as one of the 2004 Outstanding New Faces for her role in *Diva Daughters Dupree* at Penumbra. Kimberly received a 2005 – 2006 Many Voices Fellowship through the Playwrights' Center.

Sold out run demands 14 additional performances of *Ain't Misbehavin'* – *The Fats Waller Musical Show*, the first show of the 30th Anniversary 2006-2007 season. The run is now extended through November 5, 2006. Penumbra, critically acclaimed for its mission-driven art, is celebrating its anniversary with a season of musicals and lyrical dramas honoring the rich and diverse history of African American art, history and culture.

The Penumbra 30th Anniversary Season presented by Target and Star Tribune.