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BLACK NATIVITY: A SEASON FOR CHANGE

By T. Mychael Rambo
and Lou Bellamy

Directed by Dominic Taylor
Presented by Target

December 3 - December 27, 2009
Previews December 1 & 2

INTRODUCTION

Black Nativity has become a hallmark of the Twin Cities Christmas tradition. Over the years, patrons of Penumbra Theatre have witnessed many incarnations of the production, which celebrates the story of the birth of Christ as told through the lens of African American gospel music. Written originally in 1961 by Langston Hughes, *Black Nativity* is a patchwork compilation of traditional gospel songs, folklore and African American spirituality. The rhythm of Langston Hughes' work echoes a pulse that reverberates through various modes of black culture to the far reaches of the diaspora. Its point of origin was Africa. It was heartbeat, blood beat, an umbilical cord. It was the drum. Over time and across the Middle Passage the song was changed but not broken. Hughes is among a select few who managed to harness its prowess with his pen, he captured its cunning, shifting ingenuity throughout the ages. Langston Hughes wrote about himself, his family, his life and living. He loved black people. He marveled at, lamented and celebrated the black experience. He endeavored to write the spirit that would not die out, the very breath of a people that, in and of itself, was a revolution.

One of the Penumbra favorites featured in this musical is “the quilting song,” when five women sit together and stitch a quilt for Mary who has just birthed Jesus. This year we commemorate the textile artisans in our community who honor our ancestors by keeping record through a rich tradition of African American quilting.

This year come with us on a journey back through four hundred years of revolutionary artistry proving that sometimes a needle and thread may be greater than a sword.