

George Brant's "Marie and Rosetta" swinging into the Playwrights' Center

(Minneapolis, MN—January 15, 2015)—The popular Ruth Easton New Play series at the Playwrights' Center continues in February with readings of the new play "**Marie and Rosetta**" by **Core Writer George Brant**. The play with music, about gospel greats Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Marie Knight, will have two public readings: **Monday, February 2 and Tuesday, February 3 at 7 p.m. at the Playwrights' Center**, 2301 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. The readings are free but tickets go fast so claim yours at pwcenter.org before they are gone.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe brought fierce guitar playing and swing to gospel music. She was a legend in her time and a huge influence on musicians like Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. "Marie and Rosetta" chronicles her first rehearsal with a young protégée, Marie Knight, as they prepare to embark on a tour that would establish them as one of the great duos in musical history.

"Rosetta was so ahead of her time," says playwright George Brant, "but a lot of people today don't know about her. She was transgressive in a lot of ways, even in just the fact that she played guitar, which is not traditionally a female instrument per se. She was playing with gospel music in the way that Ray Charles did decades later, really pushing gospel music to a different place by adding this swing to it."

When asked why he chose this moment—the collaboration with Marie Knight—out of Rosetta's long musical career, Brant says, "they created this beautiful music together where they're both singing full out, which I really find fascinating. It's not a case of Marie just sitting in the back adding harmony; they're both just going for it and weaving in and out of each other's harmonies in an amazing way with such energy and joy."

Playwrights' Center Producing Artistic Director Jeremy B. Cohen says, "George had a private workshop of 'Marie and Rosetta' here last year, and I'm so excited to hear its music filling our theater again. It's a beautifully intimate play—the viewer gets to be a fly on the wall, just sitting in on this rehearsal as two artists get to know each other as much through playing music together as through their conversation."

George Brant is a Core Writer at the Playwrights' Center. His play "Grounded" is one of the most-produced plays of this season, and recently had a Frank Theatre production at the Playwrights' Center. His other plays include "Elephant's Graveyard," "The Mourners' Bench," "Any Other Name," and "Three Voyages of the Lobotomobile." His work has been produced internationally by such companies as Trinity Repertory Company, Cleveland Play House, City Theatre, Gate Theatre of London, Page 73, and SF Playhouse. He has been awarded the Kennedy Center's David Cohen National Playwriting

Award, the Smith Prize, the Keene Prize for Literature, an NNPN Rolling World Premiere, an Austin Critic's Circle Best New Play Award, two Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Awards, and a Creative Workforce Fellowship. He is published by Samuel French, Oberon Books, and Smith & Kraus.

The Ruth Easton New Play Series provides Playwrights' Center Core Writers with 24 hours of workshop time to develop a new play in collaboration with top-notch actors and other theater artists. The workshops culminate in public readings, giving audience members a uniquely intimate and accessible way to experience the thrill of raw new work and be part of the creative process. This year the series expands from one reading of each play to two.

All events in the Ruth Easton New Play Series are free and open to the public. Reservations are recommended; reserve your spots at pwcenter.org or by contacting the Playwrights' Center at (612) 332-7481 or info@pwcenter.org.

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THE 2014-15 RUTH EASTON NEW PLAY SERIES

December 8 and 9 at 7 p.m.*Forget Me Not When Far Away* by Kira Obolensky
January 12 and 13 at 7 p.m.*Dust* by Qui Nguyen
February 2 and 3 at 7 p.m.*Marie and Rosetta* by George Brant
March 2 and 3 at 7 p.m.*The REALNESS: the second break beat play* by Idris Goodwin
April 6 and 7 at 7 p.m.*Romeo & Naomi Ramirez* by Kathryn Walat

FORGET ME NOT WHEN FAR AWAY by Kira Obolensky

John Ploughman returns from war to find his hometown very much changed. After ten years thriving without men, the town has little place for an aging Don Juan—much less one who has been counted on the list of the dead. In order to regain his place among the living and find his lost love, he is forced to confront both the mistakes of his past and the unromantic reality of his present. A tragic comedy about shifting gender politics and the ways we learn to adapt.

DUST by Qui Nguyen

Sixteen-year-old Thuy dreams of joining her GI father's American family and escaping her life in post-war Vietnam. The problem is, most of her new family doesn't know she exists. Her arrival in their small Arkansas town causes a rift in the household and brings up years of buried secrets. Always in search of a place to belong, Thuy discovers that she isn't the only one searching.

MARIE AND ROSETTA by George Brant

Bringing fierce guitar playing and swing to gospel music, Sister Rosetta Tharpe was a legend in her time and a huge influence on Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Ray Charles. *Marie and Rosetta* chronicles her first rehearsal with a young protégée, Marie Knight, as they prepare to embark on a tour that would establish them as one of the great duos in musical history.

THE REALNESS: THE SECOND BREAK BEAT PLAY by Idris Goodwin

Thomas has escaped the 'burbs and come to the city to savor authentic hip hop culture. He falls madly in love with Prima, a super-dope MC, and he is willing to lie, cheat, and scheme to win her well-guarded heart. But is he after real love or fulfilling a middle class rap fantasy? A meditation on authenticity and class collision, *The REALNESS* follows a young man's journey for his heart and true identity.

ROMEO & NAOMI RAMIREZ by Kathryn Walat

She's a rookie cop on her first undercover narcotics assignment. He's an Honors English student trying to live up to his Shakespearean name. And this is Florida, with some of the toughest drug laws in the nation. So is it a love story...or a tragedy? Whose version are you going to believe?