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For Immediate Release

**The Center for Performing Arts' 25th Anniversary Season Moves Forward
with Timely Virtual Programming**

University Park, IL (October 22, 2020) – Despite setbacks from the COVID-19 pandemic, Governors State University's Center for Performing Arts (the Center) is moving forward with its 25th Anniversary Season. This year, the Center will go from welcoming thousands of patrons in person, to bringing diverse programming directly to patrons' homes. Like Yin and Yang, the Center's 2020-21 season will merge the familiar with the disruptive, the old with the new: acknowledging the past 25 years while looking forward and reimagining the next 25.

The Center for Performing Arts invites community members to share their experiences, stories, and memories associated with the organization. Selected stories will be featured throughout the season on social media.

Since its opening in December of 1995, the Center has seen four GSU University Presidents, four Executive Directors, dozens of Board and Committee Chairs, six Illinois Governors, endured The Great Recession of 2008, a two-year state-wide budget crisis of higher education, social and economic downfalls, a polar vortex, and the Global COVID-19 pandemic. Through all these changes, the Center has continued its vital work and is excited to usher in a new era with Governors State University's new president Dr. Cheryl Green, a passionate advocate for the arts. Dr. Green says, "The visual and performing arts have always inspired and uplifted me and they do the same for our students. Such experiences are vital to the educational experience and I look forward to the upcoming season."

The 25th Anniversary Season kicked off with a [Virtual Season Launch Party](#) on October 10. The launch features artists and partners who graced the Center's stage over the past 25 years,

and gives audiences a sneak peek at what they can expect in the coming months, and a few surprise appearances.

Executive Director Lana Rogachevskaya acknowledges, “A joyful song and dance routine cannot adequately honor this moment of change and disruption. The pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, and racial justice crises are wake up calls that demand attention. With the Center’s doors closed and touring productions on pause, we have curated a virtual season that is designed to simultaneously entertain, inspire, and comfort while also disrupting, disturbing, and dismantling biases so that we can educate, connect, and empower.”

The new **Beyond Conversation Series** invites artists, scholars, and activists to join a virtual campfire: sharing experiences that reflect our diverse and vibrant worlds. The first segment, [**Beyond Conversation: The Intersection of Opera and Race**](#) streamed October 18 on YouTube. The conversation features seven Chicago-based opera artists sharing their perspectives on navigating rigid racial boundaries in the industry while exploring solutions to enact change and equity.

The Center continues its creative partnership with MPAACT (Ma’at Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theatre). This sixth collaboration features two podcast plays: ***Black and Blue*** and ***Feral*** by Shepsu Aakhu. These podcast plays invite audience members to embrace discomfort through raw, real, and mature language and candid conversations. [***Black and Blue***](#) tells the story of two Black Chicago police officers’ conflicted allegiance immediately following the release of the video depicting the killing of Laquan McDonald. [***Feral***](#) tells the story of the death of FX (Francis Xavier), a politically motivated, idealistic graffiti artist, and his family’s struggle with the media response to black victimhood and trauma. The goal of these podcast plays is to create a shared community in a safe virtual format without sacrificing the quality of the art experience.

MPAACT’s podcast plays will serve as a springboard for candid community and campus dialogue, expanding the Beyond Conversation series. While the podcast plays offer a theatrical framework, the November 14 [**Beyond Conversation: Black, Blue and Beyond**](#) panel will explore the relationship and tensions between the Black Lives Matter movement and law enforcement, as well as what it means to be in law enforcement and Black. The December 12 [**Beyond Conversation: Shaping our Narrative**](#) panel is presented in conjunction with ***Feral***

and will unpack and analyze the role the media plays in shaping and framing the narratives and experiences of the grieving Black families.

The Center continues its Arts in Education series with an immersive, virtual, educational experience [**Through the Eyes of a Friend**](#) by Living Voices streaming November 2, 2020 through January 31, 2020. This intimate, one-woman performance tells the story of Anne Frank through the eyes of her best friend. Educators will be provided with resources for teaching and incorporating the holocaust into curriculum. This virtual experience will offer students the opportunity to view with their families, inviting multi-generational conversations.

Governors State University's Theatre and Performance Studies (TAPS) is currently in virtual rehearsals for fall drama [**Failure: A Love Story**](#), demonstrating the resilience and resourcefulness of artists. The production will be streamed on Broadway On Demand November 20-22 and will consist of recorded Zoom sessions. The cast of nine features GSU students, community members from the Chicagoland area, Nashville, San Francisco, and New Jersey.

[**The TAKE FIVE Fest**](#) (December 4-6) and **Opera Cabaret** (January 17, 2021) will celebrate, inspire, and nourish, our community with familiar artists as well as original numbers by new voices. The [**TAKE FIVE Fest**](#) invites the community to create, share and enjoy original, short, digital stories, from Chicagoland and beyond, to activate and inspire. Submissions will be accepted through November 15.

Opera Cabaret will showcase four new and exciting Opera Up Close artists spotlighting an eclectic repertoire of opera, Kurt Weill, art songs by African-American composers, and musical theater pieces.

Despite the shocking set-back to the Performing Arts industry, the Center remains committed to bringing together diverse artists and audiences to create experiences and memories that activate compassion and heal our world. Patrons will have the option to access their events on a sliding scale. Cultural Marketing Director Jane Cox says, "We know that many of our patrons are struggling financially. That's why we are offering a pay-what-you-can option. The majority of our streaming events offer a FREE or \$5 option for the entire household. For those who are in a position to contribute more, we invite you to support our work by selecting higher priced options and donating what you can."

The Center for Performing Arts thanks generous partners, funders, and individual contributors including The National Endowment for the Arts, Arts Midwest, ComEd, First Midwest Bank, and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Tickets for events from October through December are now on sale at CenterTickets.net. 2021 performances are in production and will be announced throughout the season.

For more information, to purchase tickets, to submit your story about the Center or work to the TAKE FIVE Fest, visit CenterTickets.net

Subscribe to the Center's YouTube channel at youtube.com/GSUCenter

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