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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governors State University Alumnus Chuck Smith returns to Direct Acclaimed Gospel Musical CROWNS

University Park, IL— “Crowns - A Gospel Musical” by Regina Taylor, a musical that stirs emotions and sparks multi-generational conversations about the importance of community, faith, and tradition is coming to the Governors State University Center for Performing Arts for two shows on November 16 at 8 p.m. and November 17 at 4 p.m.

Governors State University alumnus and honorary degree recipient Chuck Smith, a resident director at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre will direct. Smith says, "Regina Taylor is a fellow artistic staff member at Goodman we've been friends for over 20 years. However, I have never had the opportunity to direct any of her work until now. I am thankful to GSU and MPAACT for selecting me to stage CROWNS at my Alma Mater, Governors State University." In fact, Taylor’s critically acclaimed piece was last produced in the Chicagoland area by the Goodman Theater in 2012.

MPAACT (Ma'at Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theatre) is producing CROWNS and embarking on its fifth partnership with GSU to bring this beloved musical to life. MPAACT’s executive producer Shepsu Aakhu says, “I have always been drawn to Crowns... from the very first time I saw it, from the very first song sung. One generation determined to connect and validate the generation that follows... its American - its Chicago, and its delightfully brutally honest in its conversations... how could you do anything but love the music and the message?”

Crowns integrates music—primarily gospel with a smattering of jazz, hip-hop, R&B, and rap—and dance, and explores Black female identity from both the individual and collective perspectives. Its matriarchal conversation follows teenaged Yolanda and a circle of older women who help her link her own experiences to the stories of her relatives, her history, and her culture.

Using the format of a gospel church service, “hat queen rules” of etiquette serve as metaphors for life and a black woman's power to control her environment.

The production reinforces CPA’s efforts to bridge generational divides and strengthen identity awareness by highlighting the importance of shared experiences. A free pre-

show panel on November 16 at 6:30 p.m.: “Breaking down the Myth of the Millennial” will launch the conversation about equal partnership across generations.

A pre-show Southern Tea Party experience hosted by award-winning WTTW producer and journalist Sylvia Ewing is available prior to the Sunday matinee for an additional \$50 per ticket. The Party will feature savory and sweet southern treats, teas and loads of southern style hospitality.

CROWNS is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts with additional contributions from Arts Midwest’s nine-member state agencies and the Crane Group. For more information on this National Endowment for the Arts grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).

Tickets for “Crowns” can be purchased at CenterTickets.net, at the Box Office, or by phone at 708.235.2222.

Box Office: 1 University Parkway, University Park, IL Hours: Monday - Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and two hours prior to all performances.

Discounts are available for students, children, seniors 65+, groups of 10+, and patrons purchasing three or more shows.

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Parking is free. For best GPS directions, use the location search term “Governors State University.”

About GSU Center for Performing Arts

The Center for Performing Arts (CPA) serves over 50,000 patrons annually, offering diverse, high-quality, and affordable cultural and arts education experiences. CPA presents concerts, dance, theatre, opera, and family programs from national touring acts, Chicago-based artists, and community and academic theatre as part of the Governors State University Theatre and Performance Studies program.

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GSU is located 35 miles south of Chicago in University Park, IL and is celebrating its 50th anniversary. GSU serves over 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students per school year with degree programs that prepare them for success in business, industry, healthcare, the arts, and education. As a state university, GSU is committed to providing high-quality, accessible, and responsible higher education opportunities and committed to embracing diversity and academic excellence while transforming student passion into lifelong purpose.