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### **For Immediate Release**

#### **The Center for Performing Arts' partners with MPAACT for Podcast Plays and explores the intersection of art and activism with Beyond Conversation Series**

University Park, IL (November 9, 2020) – The Center for Performing Arts acknowledges that the racial justice crises are wake up calls that demand attention. Executive Director Lana Rogachevskaya says, “A joyful song and dance routine cannot adequately honor this moment of change and disruption. 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.”

Following this commitment, the Center is proud to continue 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.

The podcast plays will serve as a springboard for candid community and campus dialogue, expanding the Beyond Conversation series. Rogachevskaya invites audiences, “To join a ‘virtual campfire’ with fellow artists, activists, scholars, healers, change-makers, ruckus-makers in our community. Using the performing arts as catalysts of change, each segment will tackle a complex, challenging, and socially significant topic. Panelists will lean into tension to share

personal stories, knowledge and perspectives in a solution-oriented dialogue to enact and inspire change beyond the conversation.”

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. Panelists represent different as well as intersecting perspectives and include *Black and Blue* director Andrea Diamond; retired Chicago homicide detective and foster parent Gerald Hamilton; actor, writer and former police officer J. David Shanks, and moderator Almethia Franklin, Governors State University professor of criminal justice.

The December 12 [\*\*Beyond Conversation: Shaping our Narrative\*\*](#) panel will be 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. Panelists include *Feral* playwright Shepsu Aakhu; Cleo Pendleton: mother of late Hadiya Pendleton; Jhmira Alexander, President of Public Narrative, and will be moderated by an award-winning journalist, Illinois 2020 Humanitarian Award recipient and Center for Performing Arts Board Member Sylvia Ewing.

Audiences will have the option to access these events on a pay-what-you-can scale, including a FREE option. 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.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [CenterTickets.net](https://www.CenterTickets.net)

Subscribe to the Center's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/GSUCenter](https://www.youtube.com/GSUCenter)

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