

NEWS RELEASE

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WORLD PREMIERE: WACO THEATER CENTER AND WATTS VILLAGE THEATER COMPANY PRESENT MARTY AND THE HANDS THAT COULD

World Premier of Marty and the Hands that Could Written by Award-Winning Playwright Josh Wilder, Directed by Larry Powell Opens April 28 at Watts Community Labor Action Committee's Phoenix Hall in Los Angeles

WACO (Where Art Can Occur) Theater Center co-founders and artistic directors **Richard and Tina Knowles Lawson** in partnership with **Watts Village Theater Company** co-artistic directors **Donna Simone Johnson and Bruce Lemon** present **Marty and the Hands that Could**, written by **award-winning playwright Josh Wilder** and **award-winning director Larry Powell**.

The play contemplates the ongoing imprint the justice system and addiction has on Black families. Released from prison on the eve of his 25th birthday, Marty returns home to his family in South Philly, equipped with a handwritten manuscript and big dreams to turn his life around. But his cousin Junior has also come home with problems of his own, setting them on a collision course as they struggle to break free of the curse that has haunted their family for generations. Can Marty put his hands to good use, or is his fate already written?

"I wrote **Marty and the Hands That Could** after my cousin asked me to do something with his book that he wrote in jail. Right after he gave me his book he was gone again. It happened so fast, I knew I had something to write about, but it needed time. When the time finally came to write, I wanted to create a portrait of a man who is trying to make his own myth before the forces of recidivism disrupt his climb. But it simply just might be a love letter. A love letter to victims of incarceration including those incarcerated, previously incarcerated, and their families. Specifically, this is a love letter to the Black community who has been unfairly targeted by the prison system. I want to thank my cousin for trusting me to tell the story" says **Playwright Josh Wilder**

The production stars **Matthew Elam** as Marty, **Aaron Shaw** as Junior, **Bernadette Speakes** as Neet, **Montae Russell** as Mike Money, **Joshua R. Lamont** as Nick, **Akilah Walker** as Angel, **Camden Coley** as Lil' Mar, and **Joy DeMichelle** as Tan.

“We had so many talented Black thespians audition for these roles, and I am excited to work with our talented cast. I feel supremely honored that Mr. Wilder trusts me to shepherd his vision. I want audiences to walk away knowing they are loved and to see themselves in the emotions and ups and downs of each character. I truly believe that there is a character that represents each of us.” says **Director Larry Powell**

The production and design team includes Scenic Designer **Yohannes Yamassee**, Costume Designer **Sankara McCain**, Sound Designer **Alexis Tongue**, Composer **Dr. Marcus Norris**, Lighting Designer **Michéal D. Ricks**, Props Designer **Jo Siri**, and Intimacy & Fight Director **Chels Morgan**.

“Partnering with WACO Theater Center to bring this play to Watts Village at WLCAC represents the power of collaboration amongst Black cultural organizations. For us, this is just the beginning of our work together as we hold space for and amplify Black stories and storytellers.” says **Bruce Lemon of Watts Village Theater Company**.

The world premiere of *Marty and the Hands that Could* is supported in part by a gift from the Los Angeles New Play Project.

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TICKETS

The show runs April 27 - May 21 at Watts Community Labor Action Committee Phoenix Hall, 10950 S. Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA.

Tickets can be found at: wacothatercenter.com/marty

ABOUT WACO THEATER CENTER

WACO Theater Center is a performing and visual arts organization dedicated to the empowerment of Los Angeles artists, young people and stories of the African diaspora.

Founded in 2016, WACO opened its doors to the public in 2017. Located in the heart of North Hollywood's Arts District, the state-of-the-art complex includes a 99-seat theater, an art gallery space and is the home of Richard Lawson Studios. Over its five year history, WACO has invested in more than 700 artists and 1000 young people in Los Angeles and beyond. WACO's mentorship program Tina's Angels and Richard's Warriors, exposes inner-city youth to the world of the arts and opportunities beyond their zip code. Each year participants are provided computers, attend workshops like etiquette class, and field trips to create first time experiences. WACO is committed to providing a creative center where art can occur and give artists and youth a place to grow their talent and celebrate their artistry.

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ABOUT WATTS VILLAGE THEATER COMPANY

WATTS VILLAGE THEATER COMPANY nurtures and produces works of theater and educational programming that inspire action and dialogue about contemporary social issues to honor the rich history, cultural diversity and under-served populations of South Los Angeles.

PRESS INQUIRIES

Press and media, please apply for event credentials via email to **Erica Tucker** at press@wacothatercenter.com

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