

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WACO Theater Center Launches 2024 Season with "We the People" Festival and Artist Residencies, Playwright Convening, and National Grant Initiative

Los Angeles, CA (May 22, 2024) – WACO Theater Center, renowned for its connective approach to the arts and mentorship for Black communities, announces its much anticipated 2024 artistic season. Kicking off with the new "We the People" Festival on June 7-8 and June 28-29, the season promises a dynamic exploration of artistry and social impact.

"We the People" Festival: This two-weekend festival of Black art and ideas, ignites the summer in advance of the 2024 election season, with a celebration of community, culture, and artistic expression. Featuring the work of five Los Angeles artists, guests will experience live performances, interactive installations, and thought-provoking conversations. The festival promises a captivating experience for audiences of all ages.

Artist Residencies: Five groundbreaking artists will embark on residencies this May and June, fostering a space for artistic development and the creation of new work. These residencies culminate in presentations, workshops, and other public engagement opportunities in the We the People Festival. Artist-in-Residence include Semaj Miller, Tashara Gavin-Moorehead, Jamaal 'Hasef' Tolbert, Nickloas Vaughan and Los Angeles native Yazmin Monét Watkins.

National Convening of Black Playwrights: On Juneteenth, WACO convenes a national gathering of 100 Black playwrights, co-hosted by the esteemed Dominique Morisseau and Aleshea Harris in partnership with artEquity. This gathering fosters dialogue, collaboration, and professional development, nurturing the next generation of powerful voices in theater and the arts as a whole.

New Gilead Setting the P.A.C.E. Grant: WACO, in partnership with Gilead's Setting the Pace initiative, announces a groundbreaking creative program for a national intervention strategy focused on Black women and HIV. This initiative aims to amplify the voices of Black women and empower them to create impactful projects that raise awareness and address critical issues related to HIV.

"WACO Theater Center is committed to fostering artistic expression that ignites social change," says Shay Wafer, Executive Director. **"This season embodies our**

mission, fostering a platform for artists, playwrights, and activists to connect, create, and inspire."

Tickets for the We the People Festival go on sale today at <https://wacothatercenter.com/>.

Stay tuned for further details about artist residencies, the playwright convening, and the national activation focused on Black women and HIV.

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About WACO Theater Center

WACO (Where Art Can Occur) 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. We present, commission and develop artistic works to provide artists and young people a platform to showcase and voice their creativity.

SELECTED PROGRAMMING FROM WACO THEATER CENTER'S 2023/24 SEASON

Let Me Check In the Back by Nickolas Vaughan

June 7 at 8 pm

June 8 at 3 pm

June 8 at 8 pm

WACO Theater Center

5144 Lankershim Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 91601

Let Me Check In The Back is a hybrid, immersive solo performance set in a fictional pop-up concept store, where shoppers experience a delayed- coming-of-age story told from the Black queer perspective of the store's owner, Ajani XYZ .Through an Afrofuturistic lens, this project explores Black Joy, the intersectionality of being Black and queer, and the power of unabashed self-love.

Vitamin Jazz by Tashara Gavin-Moorehead

June 7 at 8 pm

June 8 at 3 pm

June 8 at 8 pm

WACO Theater Center

5144 Lankershim Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 91601

Vitamin Jazz brings together a jazz choreographer, instrumentalist and vocalist to unpack a health disparity among Black women across the diaspora. The project is an ethnographic,

experimental, jazz performance and documentary series highlighting the epidemic of uterine fibroids in African American women and womb holders of African descent.

Sweet Bea's by Semaj Miller

June 28 at 8 pm

June 29 at 3 pm

June 29 at 8 pm

WACO Theater Center
5144 Lankershim Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 91601

Sweet Bea's is a humorously heartfelt homage to the Blues, family, and what it was like growing up on the southside of Chicago in the 90s. Through storytelling and an assortment of Blues staples, the show is a love letter to a time when it seemed like you didn't need much to have a good time. Join us to hear all of life's lessons hidden in the lyrics of Blues legends Johnnie Taylor, Bobby Blue Bland and more.

A Vessel Born to Float by Yazmin Monét Watkins, with Direction by Larry Powell

June 28 at 8 pm

June 29 at 3 pm

June 29 at 8 pm

WACO Theater Center
5144 Lankershim Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 91601

A Vessel Born to Float is an interdisciplinary experience showcasing the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and—self love. Through poetry, theatre and comedy, the work touches on various aspects of justice, provides affirmations for Black women, shares letters of queer love and spreads immense love and pride for Black people.

groWTH by Hasef

June 29 at 11am - 3pm (Opening Day)

June 29 at 12pm - 1pm (Artist Talk)

WACO Theater Center
5144 Lankershim Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 91601

groWTH explores the vibrant intersection of Black identity, community, and the potential for positive change. Through mixed-media works featuring Black figures in barbershops, with plants taking root where their heads would be, the exhibit delves into the power of nurturing growth within ourselves and our communities.

groWTH will be on view Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM, and by appointment through July 31, 2024.

TICKETS

Tickets for WACO Theater Center's 2024 season will be available online at:

www.wacothatercenter.com

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 and art gallery. Over its seven year history, WACO has invested in more than 700 artists and 1000 young people in Los Angeles and beyond. WACO's mentorship program exposes inner-city youth to the world of the arts and opportunities beyond their zip code. Each year participants are provided computers, attend workshops and field trips to broaden their experiences and to enhance their personal growth and development. 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.

WACO Theater Center is a registered 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

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SUPPORT

Support for our 2024 programs has been provided by California Humanities, Gilead Sciences, Inc., Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, #StartSmall Initiative and individual donors.

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communications@wacothatercenter.com

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