

## NEWS FROM PENUMBRA THEATRE

*For Immediate Release*

November 7, 2005

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### *Black Nativity* *A Celebration of Family, A Celebration for the Soul...Testify!*

**November 7, 2005; St. Paul, MN:** Penumbra Theatre Company, the nation's premier African American theater, proudly announces the opening of *Black Nativity A Celebration of Family, A Celebration for the Soul...Testify!* on Friday, November 25, 2005.

Conceived by Penumbra company member T. Mychael Rambo and Artistic Director and Founder, Lou Bellamy, this year's *Black Nativity* marks the 18<sup>th</sup> production of this acclaimed holiday tradition. At home on the Penumbra stage for the second year in a row, this 2005 holiday gospel extravaganza celebrates family as the heart of community. This powerful production preserves the intent of the very first show in 1987 by bringing together the African American gospel tradition with traditional community values. The 2005 production, set in the present, returns to traditional African American values as it celebrates spirituality, continuity, and the role of family in caring, healing, rejuvenation, and growth. This exciting staging of *Black Nativity* is based on real stories as told from people within the community, gathered this year by Professor Tisch Jones.

"The stories are about us. They are us. Infused with song and dance, T. Mychael and I have attempted to dramatize these stories in celebration of the Christmas Season and the ways in which community comes together for this labor of love." Lou Bellamy

*Black Nativity A Celebration of Family, A Celebration for the Soul...Testify!* shares these stories as it takes us on a powerful gospel journey with newly arranged and originally composed music by Keith McCutchen along with old favorites such as "No Room at the Inn," "Angels We Have Heard on High," "Silent Night," "Joy to the World," and many more! The performance features live music by award winning musicians, original dance choreographed by the renowned Uri Sands of Tu Dance Company and Penumbra Company member Austene Van, and a stellar choir ensemble that includes members of "Moore by Four" and the Grammy-Award winning "Sounds of Blackness." Featured vocalists include Erika Blackwell, Geoff Jones, Ashley Commodore, Ginger Commodore, Cameron Hughes, Tonia Hughes Patricia Lacy-Aiken, Greta Oglesby, Jamela Pettiford, Thomasina Petrus, T. Mychael Rambo, and Jack Yates. Under the direction of Lou Bellamy, and the musical direction of Keith McCutchen, the power and energy released on stage promises to move, inspire, and stir your soul!

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## *Quick Reference*

- Production:** *Black Nativity*  
*A Celebration of Family, A Celebration for the Soul...Testify!*
- Artists:** **Lou Bellamy (Co-conceiver, Producer and Director),**  
**T. Mychael Rambo (Co-Conceiver and Ensemble Member)**  
**Keith McCutchen (Musical Director)**  
**Uri Sands (Choreographer)**  
**Austene Van (Ensemble Choreographer)**
- Ensemble:** Erika Blackwell, Ashley Commodore, Ginger Commodore, Cameron Hughes, Tonia Hughes, Geoff Jones Patricia Lacy-Aiken, Greta Oglesby, Jamela Pettiford, Thomasina Petrus, T. Mychael Rambo, Jack Yates
- Dancers:** Bernard Brown, Dinita Nicole, Toni Pierce-Sands
- Musicians:** Craig Deon (percussion), Sam Reeves (Keyboard)  
Jay Young (Bass)
- Sponsor:** **Thrivent Financial for Lutherans**
- Dates:** **November 25 through December 18, 2005**
- Performances:** Previews Tuesday, Nov. 22 and Wednesday, Nov. 23 at 7:30 p.m.  
Opening on Friday, Nov. 25 at 8:00 p.m.  
Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.  
Thursdays at 7:30 p.m..  
Fridays at 8:00 p.m.  
Saturdays at 2:00 and 8:00 p.m.  
Sundays at 2:00 and 7:30 p.m.
- Tickets:** \$40  
Discounts available for students, seniors & groups  
Special rate for previews  
Call Penumbra Theatre Box Office at 651-224-3180  
or purchase online at [www.penumbraetheatre.org](http://www.penumbraetheatre.org)
- Theatre Location:** Penumbra Theatre  
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