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For immediate release.

**CAST ANNOUNCED FOR AUGUST WILSON'S "MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM"
DIRECTED BY PHYLCIA RASHAD AT THE MARK TAPER FORUM
SEPTEMBER 1 THROUGH OCTOBER 16, 2016**

Center Theatre Group has announced the casting for August Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" which begins previews September 1, opens September 11 and continues through October 16, 2016, at the Mark Taper Forum.

Phylcia Rashad, who directed Wilson's "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" at the Taper in 2013, will direct this groundbreaking play that depicts the racism and exploitation in the music industry through a 1927 recording session in Chicago with a legendary blues singer. "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" is inspired by the real-life Gertrude "Ma" Rainey.

The cast features, in alphabetical order, Greg Bryan, Keith David, Jason Dirden, Damon Gupton, Matthew Henerson, Nija Okoro, Lamar Richardson, Ed Swidey, Glynn Turman and Lillias White.

Scenic design is by John Iacovelli, costume design is by Emilio Sosa, lighting design is by Elizabeth Harper, sound design is by Dan Moses Schreier and the production stage manager is David Blackwell.

"This play is a searing inside account of what white racism does to its victims – and it floats on the same authentic artistry as the blues music it celebrates. Harrowing as 'Ma Rainey's' can be, it is also funny, salty, carnal and lyrical," said Frank Rich of The New York Times of the Broadway opening in 1984. Jack Kroll of Newsweek also said of Wilson's debut Broadway play, "Extraordinary! Ma Rainey rides on the exultant notes of the blues!"

Center Theatre Group has presented eight of August Wilson's plays: "Jitney" and the Tony Award-nominated plays "King Hedley II," "Gem of the Ocean," "Radio Golf" and "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" at the Taper, the Tony Award-nominated play "Seven Guitars" at the Ahmanson Theatre, and the Tony Award-nominated plays "Two Trains Running" and "The Piano Lesson" (1990 Pulitzer Prize) at the Doolittle Theatre in Hollywood. Wilson's "Fences" won both the 1987 Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, programming seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation’s leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

Tickets for “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom” are available by calling (213) 628-2772 or online at www.CenterTheatreGroup.org. Tickets range from \$25 – \$85 (ticket prices are subject to change). The Mark Taper Forum is located at the Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012.

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