

For immediate release

**KENNY LEON TO DIRECT WORLD PREMIERE OF
RAJIV JOSEPH'S "KING JAMES"**

Tony and Obie Award-winning director Kenny Leon will direct the world premiere production of **"King James"** by Rajiv Joseph presented by Center Theatre Group at the Mark Taper Forum. A co-production with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, "King James" will play June 1 through July 3, 2022 (opening June 8) following its run at Steppenwolf March 3 through April 10, 2022. "King James" was co-commissioned by Center Theatre Group and Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

Basketball great "King" LeBron James's reign in Cleveland brings promise, prosperity and renewal to a city in desperate need of all three. It also brings together two friends who communicate best when they are talking and arguing about sports. "King James" is an intimate exploration of the place that sports and athletes occupy in our emotional lives and relationships. It explores the star player's impact on Cleveland, from his rookie season to the city's historic championship, and the lives of these two unlikely friends whose turbulent relationship is best navigated through their shared love of the sport in a verbal game of one on one. Though he is never seen in the show, LeBron James serves as a symbol for the hopes, desires and fears that they have bottled up since childhood.

Kenny Leon (Director) is a Tony and Obie Award-winning; Emmy-nominated; Broadway and television director. Most recently, he directed Lifetime's Emmy-nominated "Robin Roberts Presents: Mahalia." Last year, he directed the Tony Award-winning Broadway premiere of Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize winning masterpiece, "A Soldier's Play," for which he also received a nomination for Best Director. He also directed "The Underlying Chris" at Second Stage Theatre Company and the acclaimed production of "Much Ado About Nothing" at the Delacorte/Shakespeare in the Park. Broadway: "A Soldier's Play;" "American Son;" "Children of a Lesser God;" "Holler If Ya Hear Me;" "A Raisin in the Sun" (Tony Award; 2014); "The Mountaintop;" "Stick Fly;" August Wilson's "Fences," "Gem of the Ocean" and "Radio Golf." Off-Broadway: "Everybody's Ruby," "Emergence-See!" (The Public), "Smart People" (Second Stage). Television: "American Son" (adapted for Netflix), "Hairspray Live!," "The Wiz Live!," "Steel Magnolias," "Dynasty," "In My Dreams." Author, "Take You Wherever You Go." Artistic Director Emeritus, Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company. Senior Resident Director, Roundabout Theatre Company.

"King James" is the new play from Cleveland native **Rajiv Joseph** who burst onto the American theatre scene with Pulitzer finalist "Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo," which had its

world premiere at the Kirk Douglas Theatre in 2009 before being produced at the Taper and then on Broadway. Joseph's play "Archduke" had its world premiere at the Mark Taper Forum in 2017 as part of the Taper's 50th season. He has won the Obie Award for Best New American Play twice, in 2016 for "Guards at the Taj" (also a 2016 Lortel Winner for Best Play) and then in 2018 for "Describe the Night." Joseph wrote the libretto for the opera "Shalimar the Clown," based on the novel by Salman Rushdie. He was also the co-writer of the feature film "Draft Day" and wrote for two seasons on the Showtime series "Nurse Jackie." His other plays include "The North Pool," "Gruesome Playground Injuries," "Animals Out of Paper" and "The Lake Effect." Joseph is a Steppenwolf ensemble member. Currently, Joseph's "Letters of Suresh" is being performed at Second Stage in New York. His plays have been translated and produced worldwide.

Steppenwolf Theatre Company is America's premier ensemble theatre. Formed in 1976 by Gary Sinise, Jeff Perry and Terry Kinney, the ensemble has expanded to 50 celebrated artists. Productions launched at the theater, from "August: Osage County" to "Pass Over," and accolades including the National Medal of Arts and 12 Tony Awards made the Chicago theatre legendary. 2021 marks the opening of Steppenwolf's landmark Arts & Education Center—deepening the company's commitment to Chicagoland teens. steppenwolf.org.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation's preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles' leading nonprofit theatre company, which, under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Ritchie, Managing Director / CEO Meghan Pressman and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, programs seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1,600 to 2,100-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.

While Center Theatre Group performances do not begin until November 30, CTG currently plans to require all audience members to provide proof of vaccination and to wear masks at all times unless they are actively eating and drinking in designated areas. Children under 12 and those who are unvaccinated due to a medical or religious reason must provide proof of a negative PCR COVID-19 test no more than 72 hours prior to attending an indoor performance along with government issued ID. Rapid or antigen tests will not be accepted. CTG will be announcing further details, including methods of confirming vaccination records or negative test results closer to the Ahmanson's re-opening date in late November 2021. These health and safety measures are subject to change, at Center Theatre Group's sole discretion and based on evolving health and safety guidance and conditions. CTG will continue working closely with The Music Center and L.A. County officials to ensure they are following all applicable health and safety protocols. Additional information about The Music Center's safety plans, including its recent upgrades to all HVAC systems, is available at MusicCenter.org. Center Theatre Group has also upgraded the HVAC system, improving the air flow and maximizing circulation, at the Kirk Douglas Theatre which received the UL Verified Healthy Buildings Mark for Indoor Air and Water Quality as have all Music Center venues. More information is available at www.centertheatregroup.org/visit/health-and-safety/.

Tickets for "King James" and the rest of Center Theatre Group's upcoming seasons at the Mark Taper Forum and Kirk Douglas Theatre are currently available by subscription only. For information and to charge subscriptions by phone, call the Exclusive Subscriber Hotline at (213) 972-4444. To purchase subscriptions online, visit www.CenterTheatreGroup.org/Season.

Center Theatre Group offers a number of services to accommodate persons requiring mobility, vision and hearing access. For more information, please visit www.CenterTheatreGroup.org/access.

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October 27, 2021