

REVISED  
For immediate release

**CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR PEARL CLEAGE'S  
"BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY"  
AT CENTER THEATRE GROUP / MARK TAPER FORUM  
APRIL 6 THROUGH MAY 8, 2022**

Casting has been announced for "**Blues for an Alabama Sky**" directed by Center Theatre Group's Associate Artist Phylicia Rashad at the Mark Taper Forum April 6 through May 8, 2022. Set in 1930's Harlem, this revival of Pearl Cleage's rich and beautiful work opens April 13, 2022.

Tony Award-winning actress Phylicia Rashad, who originated the role of Angel in the world premiere of "Blues for an Alabama Sky" more than 25 years ago, returns to direct this timeless piece that was first presented in 1995 by Atlanta's Alliance Theatre. She leads a cast that features **Joe Holt, Nija Okoro, Dennis Pearson, Greg Alverez Reid** and **Kim Steele**.

The creative team includes **John Iacovelli** (scenic design), **Wendell C. Carmichael** (costume, wig and hair design), **Elizabeth Harper** (lighting design) and **Jeff Gardner** (sound design), with original composition by **Dontae Winslow**. Casting is by **Kim Coleman, CSA** and **Michelle Blair** is the production stage manager.

Angel is a free-spirited Cotton Club singer who's out of luck but never out of dreams. Guy is a costume designer waiting for Josephine Baker to invite him to join her in Paris. Delia, a young activist, is trying to give the women of Harlem a choice about their future. Sam, a prominent physician, is either delivering babies or out at the club letting the good times roll. And Leland, who recently arrived in Harlem from Alabama, is haunted by the wide-open skies and lost love he left behind. The lives and dreams of these men and women converge with passion and politics as the art and celebration of the Harlem Renaissance give way to the harsh realities of the Great Depression.

Tickets for "Blues for an Alabama Sky" are currently on sale at Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum and start at \$30. They are available through [CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://CenterTheatreGroup.org), Audience Services at (213) 628-2772 or in person at the Center Theatre Group Box Office (at the Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012). Performances run Tuesday through Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sunday at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Call for exceptions.

**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 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.

Center Theatre Group requires all audience members to provide proof of full vaccination along with a government or education issued photo ID upon arrival. Booster shots are required for anyone who is eligible. Per the guidelines set by the CDC, “full vaccination” means that at least 14 days have passed since receiving the final dose of an FDA-authorized or WHO-listed COVID-19 vaccine. There is no waiting period required following a booster shot. Unvaccinated guests, including children or those with a medical or religious reason, or those that are eligible for a booster shot and have not yet received it must provide proof of a negative PCR COVID-19 test taken no more than 48 hours prior to attending an indoor performance, or a negative rapid antigen test taken no more than 24 hours prior to attending an indoor performance. All tests must be administered by a professional. At-home tests will not be accepted. Center Theatre Group will also require guests to wear masks at all times in the venue. Los Angeles County has not lifted the mask mandate on County buildings. For the time being, we will be requiring masks for our audiences at all of our venues.

Center Theatre Group will continue working closely with The Music Center and L.A. County officials to ensure they are following all applicable health and safety protocols. Please note that 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. More information regarding safety updates as well as audience vaccination, testing and mask requirements is available at [CenterTheatreGroup.org/Safety](https://CenterTheatreGroup.org/Safety).

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March 15, 2022 / Revised March 16

**\*\* PLEASE NOTE:** A previous version of this release misidentified the last names of the characters Sam Thomas and Leland Cunningham.

### **BIOS**

**Joe Holt** (*Sam Thomas* \*\*) New York actor Joe Holt returns to the stage for “Blues for an Alabama Sky” at The Taper. Recent credits include Fred Wilkes on “Bel-Air”, Dr. Leo Bennett on “The Walking Dead: World Beyond,” Jesse Raymond on “All American: Homecoming,” and Detective “Mace” Cunningham on OWN’s “Delilah.” Regional credits include “Love and Information” at ACT, “Blue/Orange” at Hartford TheatreWorks, “12 Angry Men” at Merrimack Repertory and a pandemic-interrupted “The Scarlet Letter” at South Coast Repertory.

**Nija Okoro** (*Angel Allen*) is a graduate of the Juilliard School where she received a merit-based full scholarship. Since graduating, she has gotten to do stints in the National Broadway Tour of “Jitney” directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson, “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom” directed by Phylicia Rashad at the Mark Taper Forum, “Two Trains Running” at The Matrix directed by Michele Shay,

“Zoey’s Perfect Wedding” at Denver Center and the 2017 West Coast premiere of “The Legend of Georgie McBride” at the Geffen Playhouse. She has also made her way to the silver screen, having guest starred on such shows as “9-1-1: Lone Star,” “Animal Kingdom,” “The Duece,” “Start Up,” and starring in “The Black Emeror of Broadway.” She can be seen next in the Disney+ feature film “Hollywood Stargirl” directed by Julia Hart.

**Dennis Pearson** (*Leland Cunningham \*\**) is making his Mark Taper debut. Stage credits include: “GOING... GOING... GONE!” (The Hudson Theatre), “A Christmas Carol” (South Coast Repertory), “A Soldier’s Play” and “Julius Caesar” (The Studio Theatre), “The Coarse Acting Show” (Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles), “Romeo and Juliet,” “Dream Girls,” “Look Away” (Long Beach Playhouse), “A Long Bridge Over Deep Waters” and “Euripides Medea” (for which he received a Kennedy Center Irene Ryan Award Nomination). Recently, he can be seen on screen starring in “Unlocked” streaming on Peacock and “Tinderbox” (DC Black Film Festival Best Actor Winner 2020). Dennis is a graduate of the SCR Acting Conservatory and has studied with Academy Award Winner Tim Robbins and The Actors Gang, Femi Ogun's Identity School of Acting, BGB and Joy Brunson's The Joy of Acting Studio.

**Greg Alvarez Reid** (*Guy Jacobs*) is a New York city-based Actor most recently appearing in “The Bluest Eye” at The Huntington Theatre in Boston. He can also be seen in the HBO/HBO Max film “Between The World and Me.” His theatre credits consists of Off-Broadway: “The Fabulous Miss Marie” (New Federal Theatre/Castillo Theatre). Regional: “Detroit '67” (Signature Theatre), “Fences” (McCarter Theatre Center/Long Wharf Theatre), “All My Sons” (People’s Light Theatre), “Broke-ology” (Theater Alliance), “Gem of The Ocean” (Hangar Theatre), “Seven Guitars” (Studio Theatre) and renowned arts centers like The Apollo Theater and The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Locomotion) in his native Washington, D.C. He is a proud graduate of the illustrious Howard University in the newly named Chadwick Boseman College of Fine Arts and attended the British American Dramatic Academy at Oxford. Greg is making his L.A. theatre debut.

**Kim Steele** (*Delia Patterson*) returns to the Mark Taper Forum, fresh off her run in the Tony Award-winning Best Musical, “Hadestown” on Broadway. Other Broadway credits: “My Fair Lady” (Lincoln Center), “Summer: The Donna Summer Musical.” Favorite Off-Broadway/regional: “Motown the Musical” (National Tour), “Jerry Springer the Opera” (Signature Theatre Center), “Kiss Me Kate” (Pasadena Playhouse), “Hair” (Hollywood Bowl), “Carrie” (Los Angeles Theatre). Kim is a SoCal native with a B.A. in Theater Arts from UCLA.

**Phylicia Rashad** (*Director*) has directed four other productions for Center Theatre Group including “A Raisin in the Sun” at the Douglas as well as “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom,” “Joe Turner’s Come and Gone” and “Immediate Family” at the Mark Taper Forum. She also directed “Immediate Family” at the Goodman Theatre; “Fences” at the Long Wharf Theatre and McCarter Theatre; Lorraine Hansberry’s “A Raisin in the Sun” at Ebony Repertory Theatre and Westport Country Playhouse; August Wilson’s “Gem of the Ocean” at Seattle Repertory Theatre and “Four Little Girls” at the Kennedy Center. As an actress—Broadway: “August: Osage County,” “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,” “Cymbeline” (Lincoln Center Theater), August Wilson’s “Gem of the Ocean” (Tony nomination), “A Raisin in the Sun” (Tony and Drama Desk Awards), “Into the Woods,”

“Dreamgirls,” “The Wiz. Off-Broadway: Head of Passes” (Lucille Lortel Award), “The Story,” “Helen,” “Everybody’s Ruby, Blue, Bernarda.” Regional: “Every Tongue Confess,” “Blues for an Alabama Sky,” “Medea.” Film: “Creed,” “Good Deeds,” “For Colored Girls,” “Frankie and Alice,” “Just Wright,” “Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored,” “Loving Jezebel,” “The Visit.” Television: “A Raisin in the Sun” (NAACP Image Award, Emmy and SAG nominations), “The Old Settler,” “Free of Eden,” “The Cosby Show,” “Cosby.”

**Pearl Cleage** (*Playwright, she/her/hers*) is an Atlanta-based writer who is currently Distinguished Artist in Residence at the Alliance Theatre. She was appointed Atlanta’s first Poet Laureate in 2020, whose plays include “Flyin’ West,” “Blues for an Alabama Sky” and “Bourbon at the Border,” commissioned and directed by Kenny Leon at The Alliance Theatre. She is also the author of “A Song for Coretta,” written in 2007 during Cleage’s time as Cosby Professor in Women’s Studies at Spelman College. Her new play, “The Nacirema Society Requests the Honor of Your Presence at A Celebration of Their First One Hundred Years,” was commissioned by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and premiered in the fall of 2010, in a joint production by The ASF and Atlanta’s Alliance Theatre, directed by Susan Booth. Her plays have also been performed at Arena Stage, Hartford Stage, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Huntington Theatre, The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, The Long Wharf Theatre, Just Us Theatre, True Colors Theatre, Bushfire Theatre, The Intiman Theatre, St. Louis Black Repertory Company and Seven Stages. She is also an accomplished performance artist, often working in collaboration with her husband, writer Zaron W. Burnett, Jr. They have performed at The National Black Arts Festival, The National Black Theatre Festival and colleges and universities across the country. Cleage’s most recent play, “Angry, Raucous and Shamelessly Gorgeous,” premiered at the Alliance in 2019, directed by Susan Booth, and completed a run at Hartford Stage. She has recently been commissioned by Fords Theatre as part of their Lincoln Legacy Project to create “Something Moving: A Meditation on Maynard.” Cleage is also an accomplished novelist. Her novels include “What Looks Like Crazy On An Ordinary Day,” a New York Times bestseller and an Oprah Book Club selection, “I Wish I Had A Red Dress,” “Some Things I Never Thought I’d Do,” “Babylon Sisters,” “Baby Brother’s Blues” and “Seen It All and Done the Rest.” She also has written “Till You Hear From Me” (Ballantine/One World). She is also the author of “Mad at Miles: A Blackwoman’s Guide to Truth,” a groundbreaking work of race and gender, and “We Speak Your Names,” a praise poem commissioned by Oprah Winfrey for her 2005 celebration of legendary African American women and written in collaboration with Zaron Burnett. Cleage has also written for magazines, including “Essence,” “Vibe,” “Rap Pages” and “Ms.” In addition to her work as the founding editor of “Catalyst” Magazine, a literary journal, she was a regular columnist for “The Atlanta Tribune” for ten years, winning many awards for her thought-provoking columns. She has also written for TheDefendersOnline.com. Cleage has been awarded grants in support of her work from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Fulton County Arts Council, The Georgia Council on the Arts, The Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs and The Coca-Cola Foundation. Her work has earned her many awards and honors, including an NAACP Image Award for fiction in 2008.