

For immediate release

**CASTING SET FOR “FETCH CLAY, MAKE MAN”
COMING TO THE KIRK DOUGLAS THEATRE
JUNE 18 THROUGH JULY 16, 2023**

Ray Fisher will reprise his Off-Broadway role as Muhammad Ali and “The Bear’s” Edwin Lee Gibson will step into the shoes of Stepin Fetchit with the production opening June 25 in Culver City.

Drama Desk nominee **Ray Fisher** will put his gloves on again to play the role of heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali in **Will Power’s “Fetch Clay, Make Man,”** after previously performing the role Off-Broadway. In the days leading up to one of his most anticipated fights, heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali (formerly Cassius Clay), played by Fisher, forms an unlikely friendship with the controversial Hollywood star Stepin Fetchit (born Lincoln Perry), played by Obie Award-winner **Edwin Lee Gibson**, who helped develop the character with Will Power originally.

Directed by Golden Globe winner **Debbie Allen**, “Fetch Clay, Make Man” will play June 18 through July 16 at the **Kirk Douglas Theatre** in Culver City with the opening set for June 25, 2023. **Center Theatre Group** will work alongside **The SpringHill Company’s** Emmy Award-winning studio team, founded by LeBron James and Maverick Carter, to produce SpringHill’s first theatrical stage endeavor.

Joining Ray Fisher and Edwin Lee Gibson are **Wilkie Ferguson II** as Ali’s devout and loyal right-hand Brother Rashid, **Alexis Floyd** as Ali’s passionate wife Sonji Clay, and **Bruce Nozick** as William Fox – a Hollywood mogul playing hardball with Stepin Fetchit.

“We have united an all-star team to tell this fresh story about an unlikely friendship between the great Muhammad Ali and Hollywood legend Stepin Fetchit,” said Center Theatre Group’s Associate Artistic Director Tyrone Davis. “Having Ray Fisher return to his critically acclaimed performance as Ali, alongside Edwin Lee Gibson and a knock-out cast and stellar creative team is sure to hit audiences with a one-two punch of the nuanced relationship between these complex and dynamic figures and their individual struggles as two cultural icons navigating the societal issues of their era.”

With a rhythmic and enticing script by award-winning performer and playwright Will Power, “Fetch Clay, Make Man” explores the improbable bond that forms between two drastically

different and immensely influential cultural icons. One a vibrant and audacious youth, the other a resentful and widely resented relic — each fight to form their public personas and shape their legacies amidst the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-1960s. This play, based on actual events, is as powerful and poetic as Ali himself while also humorous and irreverent like Fetchit’s signature act. Finding commonality in contradiction, “Fetch Clay, Make Man” examines the true meaning of strength, resilience, and pride.

“It’s extraordinary to see these characters come to life through Will Power’s creative and dynamic writing,” said director Debbie Allen, who is making her Center Theatre Group directorial debut. “The play really paints a picture of the climate of Hollywood in the 1930s when Step was the highest paid Black actor of the time, and then in 1965 when heavyweight champion Ali prepared for his second bout with Sonny Liston and had to face the ramifications and tensions around declaring his embrace of the Nation of Islam in the wake of the Malcom X assassination. I’m really looking forward to the rehearsal process and exploring these complexities with the actors and creative team.”

The Los Angeles-based creative team for “Fetch Clay, Make Man” includes **Sibyl Wickersheimer** (set design), **Sara Ryung Clement** (costume design), **Tom Ontiveros** (lighting design), **Lindsay Jones** (sound design), and **Pablo Molina** (projection design). Casting is by **Kim Coleman, CSA** and the stage manager is **Ed De Shae**.

“Fetch Clay, Make Man” made its world premiere at the McCarter Theater Center in Princeton, New Jersey, before it was produced Off-Broadway by New York Theatre Workshop in 2013. It has since been produced throughout the nation. The Hollywood Reporter hailed that production packed a punch with “theatrical fireworks” and Fisher’s performance “powerfully conveys Ali’s charisma, humor and bluster while subtly revealing his underlying insecurities.” The New York Times added, “It bobs and weaves, moving between themes and plot points,” and “creates vivid dramatic facsimiles of these public figures.”

Tickets for “Fetch Clay, Make Man” are currently on sale and start at \$30. They are available through CenterTheatreGroup.org, Audience Services at (213) 628-2772 or in person at the Center Theatre Group Box Offices (at the Ahmanson Theatre) at The Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012 or at the Kirk Douglas Theatre (open 2 hours prior to curtain) at 9820 Washington Blvd. in Culver City 90232. Performances run Tuesday through Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sunday at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

The SpringHill Company’s Emmy Award-winning studio team, founded by LeBron James and Maverick Carter, develops and produces high-quality sports and entertainment film, audio and theatrical releases with the biggest content creators, networks, streamers, brands and platforms in the world. All studio projects are empowerment led, where content isn’t simply to entertain, but to inspire with thought-provoking themes, conversations and journeys within documentaries and scripted verticals. Studio projects include “The Shop,” “Space Jam: A New Legacy,” “Hustle,” “Turning the Tables with Robin Roberts,” “Recipe

for Change,” “Top Boy,” “Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker,” “The Wall,” untitled Nipsey Hussle docuseries, “What’s My Name: Muhammad Ali,” “The First One” with DJ Khaled, “Top Class” and many more.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading not-for-profit theatre company, which under the leadership of Managing Director / CEO Meghan Pressman and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, and in collaboration with the four Associate Artistic Directors, Lindsay Allbaugh, Tyrone Davis, Neel Keller, and Kelley Kirkpatrick, 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 country’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 circumstances to serve Los Angeles. Founded in 1967, Center Theatre Group was led by Founding Artistic Director Gordon Davidson until 2005 when Michael Ritchie was the artistic director until his retirement in 2021; Snehal Desai has been appointed the organization’s next artistic director and will begin in August of 2023. Center Theatre Group has produced more than 700 productions across its three stages, including such iconic shows as “Zoot Suit;” “Angels in America;” “The Kentucky Cycle;” “Biloxi Blues;” “Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992;” “Children of a Lesser God;” “Curtains;” “The Drowsy Chaperone;” “9 to 5: The Musical;” and “Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo.”

CenterTheatreGroup.org

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