

For Immediate Release:

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**THE BILLY HOLIDAY THEATRE
PRESENTS THE NEW YORK PREMIERE OF RICHARD WESLEY'S
AUTUMN**

BROOKLYN, N.Y. July 26, 2016- In an era of unprecedented political activity, The Billie Holiday Theatre (BHT) at The Center for Arts & Culture of Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation opens its 2016-2017 season with the New York debut of award-winning playwright, **Richard Wesley**'s political drama, *Autumn*. Directed by the acclaimed **Walter Dallas**, this production will be presented at the Kumble Theater at LIU in Brooklyn, 1 University Plaza from Thursday, October 20th through Sunday, November 6th, with a special Election Night Watch Party on Tuesday, November 8th (featuring a talkback from the *Autumn* cast and creative team).

Under the leadership of its new Executive Director, **Dr. Indira Etwaroo**, the 2016-2017 season builds on the 45-year legacy established by Executive Director **Marjorie Moon**. "It is an honor to join a continuum of theater artists who believe deeply in the revolutionary power of storytelling to elevate the national narrative and conversation," Etwaroo stated, "as we continue to solidify The Billie Holiday Theatre as a destination for world-class storytelling in the heart of Brooklyn."

Autumn, the first full-length play by Wesley in over 27 years, crashes into an unparalleled presidential election season in the US and explores the conflicts that arise when aspirations collide across a generational divide marked by sharply different political agendas. The concept of *Autumn* was gestating for more than 20 years as Wesley observed the evolution of Black politicians against a changing political landscape. "What a thrill to return to The Billie Holiday Theatre and to Brooklyn with the New York City premiere of *Autumn*," stated Wesley. "This is a timely work that raises questions about the responsibilities politicians have to the public, an especially important issue in this age of hyper-partisan politics and legislative stalemate."

Wesley's stage works include *The Black Terror* (Drama Desk Award, 1971), the Broadway production of *The Mighty Gents* (1978) and *The Talented Tenth* (Audelco Award, 1989). Wesley is also the noted screenwriter of such classic films as *Uptown Saturday Night*, *Let's Do It Again* and *Mandela & DeKlerk* (all starring Sidney Poitier) and *Native Son* (starring Oprah Winfrey & Akosua Busia). He has also written episodes for the television series, *Fallen Angels* and *100 Centre Street*. Prof. Wesley served as an Adjunct at the following institutions: Manhattanville College, Wesleyan University, Borough of Manhattan Community College and Rutgers University.

Walter Dallas is also an award winning director that brings numerous accolades to this rich production. Dallas directed the critically acclaimed world premiere of *August Wilson's Seven Guitars* at the Chicago's Goodman Theatre (which was named one of the Top Ten Best Theatre Events of 1995 by Time Magazine and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.) Other awards include an Honorary Doctorate from the University of the Arts, AUDELCO National Achievement Award for Excellence in Black Theatre, and several Bronze Jubilee Awards for Outstanding Direction. For his production of *Having Our Say* at Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum he received a 1997 NAACP Theatre Awards nomination for Best Director. His off-Broadway production of *Moms* garnered an Obie Award for its star, **Clarice Taylor**, and resulted in two successful national tours. His other world premieres include works by **James Baldwin**, **Leslie Lee**, **Sam Kelley**, **Kia Corthron**, **Ntozake Shange**, **Samm-Art Williams**, **Thulani Davis** and others.

Leading *Autumn's* cast are the following veterans of stage, TV & film: **Jerome Preston Bates** (*Seven Guitars*, *Stickfly*, *Peeples*), **Dorian Missick** (*Southland*, *Deliver Me From Evil*, *Zoe Ever After*), **Count Stovall** (*A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), and **Terria Joseph** (*Empire*, *Cornerstone*) with the remaining cast members soon to be announced.

The Billie Holiday Theatre (BHT) was founded in 1972 by **Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation** (Restoration), a community development corporation whose mission is to be a catalyst for the progressive improvement of the quality of life for the people of Bedford Stuyvesant. BHT focuses on the discovery of new voices within the African Diaspora, we seek to enlighten, entertain and educate with programming that resonates across cultural and generational barriers, and challenges social perceptions.

The Center for Arts & Culture is a dynamic campus of world class visual and performing arts. We preserve artistic and cultural legacy, promote social justice and democratic ideals, and present global stories that matter, inspiring the next generation of art-makers and audiences.

Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (Restoration), the nation's first community development organization, partners with area residents and businesses to improve the quality of life in long-blighted areas of Central Brooklyn. Our goals are to attract investment, improve the business climate, foster the economic self-sufficiency of families, enhance family stability, and promote the arts and culture. Through these activities, we seek to spur resident's economic stability and transform Central Brooklyn into a safe, vibrant place to live, work and visit. Restoration was founded in 1967 with the bipartisan support of New York Senators Robert Kennedy, Jr. and Jacob Javits. Since its inception, Restoration has brought over \$600 million in public and private investments to Central Brooklyn.

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